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**HELYBEN
OLVASHATÓ**

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AMONG TEXTS
(STUDIES IN MODERN PHILOLOGY AND
THEORY OF LITERATURE)



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SZTE Egyetemi Könyvtár



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FOREWORD

As a premiere after a series of nine volumes of comparative literary studies in Hungarian, the Department of Comparative Literature at Szeged University proudly presents this latest edition: a volume of comparative literary studies in English. The present collection of works serves as a record of both departmental research and of the tendencies in literary theories and histories that are well worth to explore, popularize, teach and draw on by all students at the department. The volume thus serves as a list of topics for potential PhD dissertations and as a list of approaches that have been open for discussion at departmental seminars, debates and conferences. This is all the more so, since this volume's studies are all results of research that follow the changing tendencies of comparative literature, including the growing interest in textuality, the juxtaposition of intertextuality and intermediality and the rethinking of hermeneutical hypotheses through modern recording systems.

Comparative literature naturally seeks a 'contextual' approach to humankind's accumulated achievements between Ancient times and the Post-modern. In other words, it requires the synchronicity and diachronicity of individual *ouevres*, pieces of works or genres to be themed not as mutually exclusive features but rather as mutually complementary sets. Hence this volume attempts, first, to read together Hungarian and non-Hungarian literature and culture, second, to confront literature with its related arts and, third, to analyze recent issues of ever-debated authorship (cf. "the death of the author") and the relationship between fiction and reference. The studies of the present volume are all clearly indicative of the wide scope and openness of the authors. The school—or rather schools—of hermeneutics and deconstruction both claim the integration—and not the exclusiveness—of individual schools into the context of the history of arts, a scene that all of us, including the authors, are parts of. Works are not to serve theories but rather the opposite: theories are to help researchers with more reliable systems of categorization, accurate terminology and consistent articulation. Theory and history mutually presuppose each other; subject and approach change in relation to each other.

This volume is sending a message about promising academic careers, conclusions and partial results, research hypotheses and analytical procedures. We hereby present it for all to enjoy and discuss.

István Fried

Edit Szalánszki

TREASURE, LITTLE PLEASURE **FOLKLORE AS RELIC**

„Everybody's looking for a reason to live
If you're looking for a reason
I've a reason to give
Pleasure, little treasure”
(Depeche Mode: *Pleasure, Little Treasure*)

Montaigne writes in his essay on experience: “I have a special vocabulary of my own; I »pass away time,« when it is ill and uneasy, but when 'tis good I do not pass it away: »I *taste it* over again and adhere to it«” (italics mine).¹ This attitude to time (*taste it*) is quite important in the history of Hungarian folklore studies: their mechanism can be observed in almost every aspect of the discourse on folklore. The development of the discipline itself is connected to the aspect of clutching to time, to the need for collection, formulated in the classic call from 1782 of the *Magyar Hirmondó* expressing the preference for collection: following the foreign (especially French, English and German) effects Miklós Révai urged the collection and publication of Hungarian folklore products.

The metaphoric denomination of folklore is very common in the writings from the 19th century in treating (or referring to) the relationship between folklore and literature and sustaining the importance of folklore. The most important tropes designating folklore in this period are *spark*,² *spring*,³ *treasure*⁴ and *relic*.

¹ Michel de Montaigne, “Of experience,” Charles Cotton trans., in William Carew Hazlitt ed., *The Essays of Montaigne, Complete*, available:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm#2HCH0106>, access: 23 March 2006.

In the French text: “J’ay un dictionnaire tout à part moy: je passe le temps, quand il est mauvais et incommode; quand il est bon, je ne le veux pas passer, je le retaste, je m’y tiens”. Michel de Montaigne, “De l’expérience,” in Alexandre Micha ed., *Essais. Livre III*. (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1979), 323.

² Cf. Ferenc Kölcsey, “Nemzeti hagyományok,” in Ferenc Kulin ed., *Nemzet és sokaság. Kölcsey Ferenc válogatott tanulmányai* (Budapest: Múzsák, 1988), 60.; In accordance with Kölcsey Arany uses it too: János Arany, “A magyar népdal az irodalomban,” in Pál S. Varga ed., *Tanulmányok és kritikák* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1998), 85.

The essay of Róbert Milbacher⁵—the first chapter of which is on the folk idiom of literature—examines in detail the 19th century approaches to the relationship between folklore and poetry. Milbacher too emphasises that the folklore is represented in the works of that period as a source or mine to exploit, needs *improvement, pruning, polishing, refining*. However, beside the common features there are differences too in the perception of folklore by different groups. These differences were examined mainly by János H. Korompay in his study entitled *Kritikatörténet, népköltészet és népiesség* (*History of Criticism, folklore and popular trends*). Korompay distinguishes four standpoints: (1) the two areas are in a hierarchic opposition, where folklore is inferior; therefore the delimitation between literature and folklore is striking and allows no passing (the circle of Ferenc Császár, Honderű); (2) the relationship between literature and folklore is hierarchic, but they are not strikingly delimited (Bajza, Toldy). (3) Some sustained their equality (late works of Erdélyi, Arany, Petőfi); (4) and there were authors who thought that folklore was perfect (Pulszky, early Erdélyi, Pesti Divatlap—Fashion Magazine of Pest—and its circle).⁶

The opposition—namely between hierarchy/equality—defining even today the folkloristic thinking on the status of folklore is present in the 19th century notion already. The research on the relationship between these two corpuses is structured by a second opposition between one-sidedness and reciprocity. According to the sustainers of the one-sidedness the passing between literature and folklore is *one-sided* (meaning that only literature has the right and possibility to access folklore), while the second group thinks that the relation between the two areas is mutual, meaning that the folklore *derives, borrows, takes over* from the literature, as this one does from folklore. Of course, it is obvious that all approaches (no matter on which side they were) served different purposes in the narrative of folkloristics. In the above sketched early stage of folkloristics, as a discipline both the outline of equality and the emphasis on difference supported the legitimization and identification efforts of the discipline taking shape

³ Cf. János Erdélyi, "[Felterjesztés]," in Ilona T. Erdélyi ed., *Nyelvészeti és népköltészeti, népzenei írások* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1991), 224.; Pál Gyulai, "Magyar népmesék," in idem *Bírálatok 1861–1903*. (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1912), 16, 17.

⁴ János Erdélyi, "Előszó [Népdalok és Mondák, I. kötet]," in Ilona T. Erdélyi ed., 231.; Pál Gyulai, "Adalék népköltészetünkhöz," in idem *Kritikai dolgozatok 1854–1861*. (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1908), 308.

⁵ Róbert Milbacher, "A lilium és a mocsármövények (Az irodalmi népiesség mint akkulturációs folyamat)," in idem *„...földben állasz mély gyökökkel...” A magyar irodalmi népiesség genezisének akkulturációs módszere és pórias hagyományának vázlatja* (Budapest: Osiris, 2000), 25–59.

⁶ János H. Korompay, "Kritikatörténet, népköltészet és népiesség," *Holmi* 11 (1995): 1620–1628.

just in those times. The persistency of the spring metaphor (and the above mentioned similar synecdoche-like metaphors) also meant that the folklore-literature relation (from the aspect of one-sidedness and reciprocity) was still perceived as one-sided.

Since the call published in *Magyar Hirmondó* the importance of collecting folklore products and the fact that this could not be postponed have been stressed in many forms. The repeated urging can be observed in the 19th century discourse as well as in folklore studies of the 20th century, thus the constraint of collecting manifested in folklore in different forms, but with the same strength. I would mention just two important authors with reference to the problem of being in the 24th hour:

One can observe mainly in these times of changing and decisive transforming of the peasant culture, that where the relevance of popular beliefs is decreasing or ceasing, [...] the practice of its transmission is fading and weakening too.⁷

I quoted the words of Ortutay from the introduction to the tales of Mihály Fedics published by him in 1978; they represent metonymically the need of the folklorist for collecting. Linda Dégh, the disciple of Ortutay formulates this even more expressively with reference to the collection of tales:

We should collect much more now, that the change of rural life abolishes the events of telling tales before our very eyes, for all that the Hungarian catalogue of folktales (which is in making) finally should ensure a real image of the rich treasure of hungarian folktales compared to that shamefully slight collection which has been gathered yet.⁸

At the same time fear of missing the opportunity, the assault of the 24th hour is not a neurosis of the Hungarian folkloristics alone. George E. Marcus defines two frequent ethnographer position in the first, long note to *Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System* published in *Writing Culture*: one is the *salvage* mode, and the other is the *redemptive* mode.⁹

⁷ Gyula Ortutay, *Fedics Mihály mesél* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1978), 71.

⁸ Linda Dégh, "Az egyéniségvizsgálat perspektívái," *Ethnographia* 1960: 30.

⁹ „The two most common modes for self-consciously fixing ethnography in historic time are what I shall call the *salvage* mode and the *redemptive* mode.” (italics mine) George E. Marcus, "Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus ed., *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1986), 165.



According to Marcus the researcher, on the one hand, positions himself as a rescuer and presents himself as “before the deluge”, moreover, he believes, on the other hand, that he would be able to salvage a *changing* cultural condition being just before a deluge. This rhetorical strategy results in the fact that the researcher generations following each other attach the same importance to their role. In the case of the redemptive mode (which is almost the same) the researcher diagnoses the survival of cultural conditions despite significant changes, so he regards a culture in its *continuity* despite all changes. This problem of continuity deeply influences folklore studies, as permanence and change (or tradition and novelty,¹⁰ if you like) is a definitive opposition in ethnography. Apart from these connotations the way how Marcus uses the terms sets in motion the sacral metaphor too, which defined—from the beginning of folklore—the idea of 24th hour that has repeatedly been occurring in its discourse, and the pressure of collection arising from this idea.

The famous volume of Thomas Percy, the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) can—due to the formulation of the title (*reliques*)—be considered the overture to this sacral relationship. Among the theorists of the 19th century of Hungarian folklore mainly the works of János Erdélyi show the salvage and redemptive mode presented by Marcus. Erdélyi uses strikingly frequently a certain metaphor for denominating folklore; it is characteristic for his writings to use and let flow metaphors abundantly, therefore it is possible that some remain unnoticed by the critics. However, some metaphors are repeated so persistently that it is no longer possible to ignore them. One of these metaphors is (as mentioned before): *folklore as relic*. He introduces it in his study entitled *Népköltészetéről* (*On Folklore*) dated 1842 already:

If some words have such a great capacity to retain the attention of scientists, how much more could earn the national self-knowledge thanks to the *relics of folklore* (italics mine)¹¹

and it is a frequent trope in his late writings between 1850 and 1860.¹² The relic metaphor appears in a writing of József Bajza from 1846 extended to language:

¹⁰ In Hungarian the word for tradition (‘hagyomány’) also means ‘heritage, share’.

¹¹ János Erdélyi, “Népköltészetéről,” in Ilona T. Erdélyi ed., 108. [„Ha egyes szavak is ennyire bírják a tudósok figyelmét, mennyivel többet nyer a nemzeti önismeret a népköltészet ereklyéiben”]

¹² Cf. “népköltészeti ereklyék” (folklore relics) (János Erdélyi, “Népköltészetünk a külföldön,” in Ilona T. Erdélyi ed., 250.; “a magyar népirodalom ereklyéi” (relics of the Hungarian folklore [folk-literature]) (János Erdélyi, “Előszó [Magyar Népmesék],” in Ilona T. Erdélyi ed., 258.

“Yet people do not have more saint *relic* and more protected *treasure*, than their language and truly written history” (italics mine).¹³ The rhetorical analysis of Erdélyi’s use of metaphors gives reason for treating more in extent the functioning of the cult of saints and relics. “It is well-known that the cult of relics doesn’t shrink back from anything, yet the demand for authenticity is not indispensable for it (that is why there are so many copies).”¹⁴ – says in a marginal remark Ernő Marosi in one of his studies. We could add to this remark that it is also well-known that the cult of relics doesn’t shrink back from anything to such a degree, that the cultic perception of objects interprets the umpteenth piece of wood as a remain from the crucifix of Christ precisely as a result of unconditioned belief in authenticity. This cult is so reckless that relics as tools of power were sold, even stolen, if needed. They tried to put under erasure the paradox feature of stealing relics by creating a specific type of medieval legend justifying it, the *furta sacra*.¹⁵ And the cult of relics is so hard to scare that according to medieval legal practice (as Gábor Klaniczay writes) touching the relic meant the authentication of the oath¹⁶ (alike later the Bible). Beside the fact that the cult of saints and relics as a narrative sets in motion several oppositions (saint/profane, life/death, clean/unclean etc.), its tropological connections are also interesting.

As the fetish object is connected to the terms of power, memory, rescue and substitute in the writings of Freud on the fetish and its function, the meaning of the fetish used in religious context before Freud also makes use of the same terms. The *fetish* in its religious (and ethnographic) sense, namely the objects of tribal communities received a religious respect (stone, wood etc.) and the cultic objects of Christianity (like relics) don’t differ these from a structural point of view. Keeping up continuity is a basic feature of these fetishes and one can prove in both types the *differance*.

The relic is the remaining trace, witness, reminder, sign of a once-present. Considering the bones and parts of the body of saints attracting a religious respect the relic acts as a synecdoche of what it refers to, and the use of the clothes of saints and other objects connected to them as relics can be interpreted

¹³ József Bajza, “Nemzetiség és nyelv,” in idem *Válogatott művei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1959), 416. [“Azért a népeknek nincs szentebb ereklyéjük és félhetőbb kincsök, mint nyelvök és híven jegyzett történetök.”]

¹⁴ Ernő Marosi, “A magyar középkor művészete a Nemzeti Múzeumban a millicentenáriumi év kiállításain,” *BUKSZ* 2 (1997): 165.

¹⁵ Gábor Klaniczay, “Rex iustus – a keresztény királyság szent megalapítója,” in idem *Az uralkodók szentsége a középkorban. Magyar dinasztikus szentkultuszok és európai modellek* (Budapest: Balassi, 2000), 131.

¹⁶ Gábor Klaniczay, “Szentkultusz a középkori Magyarországon,” in idem *A civilizáció peremén. Kultúrtörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Magvető, 1990), 223.

as a metonymic relation. No matter what kind of relic we are talking about, the relic (as a fetish) is a tie through which the saint, thus the sanctity can always be reached (by touching it directly or at least indirectly). Gábor Klaniczay mentions in his writing on the medieval cult of saints (referred to above), that “The relic was considered to be *identical* with the saint itself, like the wafer and the wine *is identified* with the body and blood of Christ (italics mine).”¹⁷ Thus, according to Klaniczay the relic and the saint are not different for the participants in the cult (that is why they could appeal for help directly to the relic).

As we can see, the topic of complete difference, opposition, and its opposite: the identity has already come in. De Man demonstrates in the functioning of the metaphor the differences that the identity and identification try to hide, the aporetic character of the literal and figural meanings of the metaphor. The resemblance, which is at the basis of tropological play, drives de Man too often to the problem of identity-difference (particularly: opposition): “resemblance is »loved« because it can be interpreted as identity as well as difference and is therefore unseizable, forever in flight.”¹⁸ He notes this in his study, *Self (Pygmalion)*, but similar phrases occur in other de Man texts too. He shows with reference to the *Second Discourse* that the result of the explicit statement of Rousseau, according to which the (proper) noun has a temporal priority against the term, is that Rousseau connects the tropological (metaphoric) function to conceptualization,¹⁹ though the replacement, the displacement can be shown out in the act of naming itself too – that is what de Man does.²⁰ De Man outlines the feature of displacement that the displacement characteristic to all tropes is realised provided that the two things basically differ:

The crossing of sensory attributes in synaesthesia is only a special case of a more general pattern of substitution that all tropes have in common. It is the result of an exchange of properties made possible by a proximity or an analogy so close and intimate that it allows the

¹⁷ Ibid. 221.

¹⁸ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 168.

¹⁹ Cf. „The text yields information on this point, though not in a simple and straight forward way. It describes conceptualization as substituting one verbal utterance (at the simplest level, a common noun) for another on the basis of a resemblance that hides differences which permitted the existence of entities in the first place.” Ibid. 144–145.

²⁰ Cf. „But if all entities are the same, namely entities, to the extent that they differ from each other, then the substitution of sameness for difference that characterizes, for Rousseau, all conceptual language is built into the very act of naming, the »invention« of the proper noun.” Ibid. 148.

one to substitute for the other without revealing the difference necessarily introduced by the substitution.²¹

This short but necessary digression becomes important in the understanding of the relic metaphor, as we will soon see. It is trivial that different cultures have a cultic respect for different (or similar) signs. Through the transfiguration of the object, the hierophany, a basically profane object becomes something totally other than it was (saint), and yet it remains an object. Thus, the sacred, the divine can be manifested, embodied only through its opposite, the profane; the appearance of the sacred always repeats the above mentioned functioning of the metaphoric displacement. The cult of saints and relics thus represents a narrative, where the act of embodiment can be interpreted as the fulfilment of a metaphoric displacement, through which the relics of saints attached metonymically to them become metaphoric too. Not forgetting that the metaphor hides its metonymic character through identification,²² the cult of saints is seen as a narrative setting in motion a series of metonymies.

The expression 'relics of folklore' refers to the term *relics of saints*, and lets us conclude that relics here mean the contemporary remains of the one-time, old folklore, so the term 'relics of folklore' refers in the writings of Erdélyi. Thanks to the relic metaphor it becomes clear that as the relic establish a connection to the body of the saint, and through this to the sacred, by means of the collection and touch of the contemporary remains of folklore one can establish a connection to the old folklore, and through this to a sacred signified, which can be equivalent with the sacred according to the narrative of the cult of saints and relics. Besides the above quotation many parts of texts indicate that Erdélyi finds it possible to reach a sacred and final signified through the research of folklore. He calls the songs preserved through the oral tradition "a saint heritage",²³ but we can understand his demand too, that we should accept all products of the folk-language as "the divine manifestation of the folk's spirit".²⁴ He emphasises that "the vocation, noble duty of today's poets is to learn about *people, the life*, to step into the sea, like Jesus, when receiving the grace of the spirit in the Jordan. [emphasis in original]".²⁵

²¹ Ibid. 62.

²² Cf. „The relationship between the literal and figural senses of metaphor is always, in this sense, metonymic, though motivated by a constitutive tendency to pretend the opposite.” Ibid. 71.

²³ János Erdélyi, "Népköltészetéről," in Ilona T. Erdélyi ed., 101.

²⁴ Ibid. 103.

²⁵ Ibid. 109.

The metaphoric and metonymic net around the saint and relic cult covers exactly the notion of folklore that can be discovered in the narratives of Erdélyi's studies on folklore, and the structure of the old-popular relation. The metaphor of Erdélyi is important because it allows us to examine the relationship between two apparently distant narratives, and through this analysis it can be proved that one narrative models, narrates metaphorically the other, and the topological structure of the two narratives can be compared with each other.

The fact that the *recollection* (or 'treasure up'), the *testimonial* and the *supplement* are connected in such a way in the *fetish*, in the *relic* (as fetish), and are connected in János Erdélyi's writings to *folklore*, lets us conclude that the relic should not be understood alone as the contemporary remains of the former, old folklore, through which a sacred signified can be tasted (by the participants). Furthermore, it is true, on the one hand that the functioning of the fetish, the narrative of the saint and relic cult model the attitude towards folklore. On the other hand, that if testimony is required only when doubt arises, and if this signified postulated as the final one (as we can read at Bajza: the language) can be reached always only in its remains and supplements (as a result of the supplementary logic), then it is easier to understand why the endless repetition of the importance of the collection of these supplements, fetishes becomes in most of the folkloristics studies an urgent task, and why the change, vanishing and the continuous postponement is so fearful in folklore studies.

Translated by Éva Incze

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Miklós SÁGHY

THE EFFECT OF FILM REPRESENTATION ON LITERATURE

(AN EXAMPLE: RHETORICAL ROLE OF THE CAMERA IN THE
NOVEL *FILM* BY MIKLÓS MÉSZÖLY)

"The medium is the metaphor"

Neil Postman

In the novel *Film* (1976) by Miklós Mészöly—an outstanding figure of post-war Hungarian literature—the question of *who is the seer and who is the narrator* has been divided on the level of metaphors as well, since the camera, as a mechanical focalizer, emphasizes the questions of seeing and making to be seen beside the act of verbal storytelling. The camera, as a trope of the narrator, signifies the intent to strive for accuracy and representation without the “knowledge of emphases”. And it indeed seems that due to its mechanical automatism the recording device really fulfils the requirement of unbiased, undistorted representation. A further advantage of the camera is that with the adjustment of its lenses, or if you like focusing, it is able to penetrate into the details of the image and make them visible and analyzable by this blow up. The novel that is reliable and that intends precise representation often uses this method, as the narrator, in a somewhat reflexive way, says a few times: if “from the rastered background we only focus and make an at least double close-up of two faces (...)—then we are able to study the anatomy of a traction beyond all passion from a micro-close point of view” (33);¹ “with our usual method: close-up to the pores” (45); “For a second, we bring it as close as to be able to see the wooden rack of crates” (80); “we show the edge of the furniture in an enlarged close-up” (89); “we bring the face so close that one is unable to think of anything else” (119), etc. These are only examples of the explained occurrences of the procedure in question, while the method itself, i.e.: close-up “to the pores” is always present in the novel’s representation technique.

However, whether the focusing operation of the camera’s *object-lens* does *indeed* results in more objective representation? Bringing something into micro-closeness is often paired with viewing the enlarged image out-of-context: “if this

¹ MÉSZÖLY Miklós: *Film*. Jelenkor, Pécs, 2002. (my translation)

image had been detached from its context and the process of its direct precedents", i.e.: through blow up, then—we could add—we would get a picture that contradicts the intention of unemphasized and unbiased representation. Or the result of accentuation from the background is that the skin of the Old Woman becomes smooth, younger as the close-up image is able to show a face, "which can be eighteen or seventy-nine years old." (120). According to these latter examples the focusing of the camera not only refines but also *reorganizes* the image, by taking it out of context as the first step.

How does the reorganizing process of the camera's closing-up procedure take place? For the analysis, let's turn to the following excerpt: the Old Woman's "neck is pigmented. It is white as dough, although she is stringy and does not seem as shaking. A few longitudinal thews push up the loose skin with the uncertainty of half-open umbrella's steel wires and let them fall back on both sides. This excerpt can be seen as a landscape from micro-closeness. (...) The Old Man (...) jerks sometimes with his sore nasal bone, shaking the baggy flesh and setaceous eyebrow-bush. The shelf-bone above the eye is hardly longer than a toy-house's flowerbox, plugged with wire-like toy-stalks" (6). Making the bodies of the old persons seen from up close results in the organization of focal surfaces and protrusions becoming *similarity relations*. In the above excerpt, the following similarity formations can be seen: "her skin is white as dough", "the thews on her face are uncertain as the wire-frame of half-open umbrellas", "the flesh on his face is loose as a bag", "the shelf-bone above his eye is almost as long and as plugged (with eyelashes) as the flowerbox of a baby-house". The metaphor "face as landscape" is at the same time summarizes the method of making the body seen from micro-closeness, namely that the "close up to the pores" first brings the focus as close as tearing it out from its context and make it into an undefined, contourless patch. This uncertainty, the close-up dissolving contours makes it possible to reorganize the picture as when the things seen cannot be identified then they can be ordered into one of the existing perception categories based on the associating abilities of the perceiver. In the case of the face, for example, the method changes its curves and depressions into real hills and valleys with the pores being craters. Or as Susan Sontag says in her work *On Photography*: Due to the close-up effect of the photography, now everyone can imagine the formerly merely *literary metaphor*: geography of the body; to make, for example, the body of a pregnant woman to be seen as a hill and a hill to be seen as the body of a pregnant woman. We can say that the method of close-up forces the application of the similarity theory, which realizes itself on the rhetorical level of the text as a formation defined as a trope of similarity, namely a metaphor.

From this point of view, bringing something into micro-closeness can be regarded as a process that draws our attention to the basic organizing principle of

the text, i.e. it zooms on it. Interpreters of the novel *Film* agree upon the view that the main structuring process of the novel is "striving for a universal analogy", which projects events happening in different points of time and their different locations related onto each other along the *relation of similarity*. At the same time, the metaphoric principle operated/forced by close-up fundamentally *differs* from the analogical process of ordering levels of time and space together because as the latter relates narratives—spoken or read stories—into associative networks, the former with, the focusing process of tearing details out of their context models the formation of a contourless image back into linguistic form. In other words: the so called "principle of universal analogy" creates relations between linguistic media, while the close-ups depict the process of the *experience of seeing* turning into language. In this sense, the novel *Film* presents a (basic) metaphoric principle working on—no fewer than—two levels. At the same time I find it important to point out that the tropes of similarity, which can be ordered to the focusing process of the camera are emphasized at least to the same extent as the "universal principle of analogy" analyzed deeply by professional literature, since the most used (almost exaggerated) method of depicting the Olds is close-up to the pores. And if we consider the feature of Mészöly's text, namely that one of its most important (and explicated) objectives is to "find out the logic of an unrepeatable act" (63), meaning that the players of the act, the Old Man and the Old Woman, are in the center of "recording", we can see that the closing-up and depicting technique appears again and again as the old persons get into focus, that is throughout the whole text.

What can be said about the similarity formations that are related to the method of close-up? First of all—the formerly mentioned—shift of media, which takes place between the image created by lighting conditions and its conceptual determination and that this formation into language is not at all without obstacles as the method of close-up obstructs the automatic process of recognizing categorization itself and forces the perceiver to try to name an experience of seeing with an undefined content based on his/her former naming categorizations. This naming is carried out with the help of the metaphor, which trope makes different experiences of seeing identical through their similarity in perception.

The formation of the shift between the world of seen objects and the sphere of language has a definition in the literature of rhetoric: *sensory metaphor*. This notion is used to depict the *shift* between stimuli transmitted by organs of perception and mental processes, namely bringing the "outside" experience "inside". This way we can talk about visual, acoustic, tactile, and—rarely, but all the more significantly—smell and taste metaphors. In his study *Metaphor*, Paul de Man analyzes the short allegory in Rousseau's Essay on the

origin of language² pointing out the metaphoric process of transforming a visual experience into the inside, namely how a perceiving person changes the outside, visible characteristics into his or her inside feelings. In his views the mode of operation linked to sensory and perceptual metaphors can be found at the basis of the order of notions. By analyzing Rousseau's example he shows that creation of the notion of *man* has born out of the linguistic capturing of a "spontaneous" and "passionate" moment of *visual experience*, which is based on a mistake, on "blind passion". When a primitive man on meeting other men names them giants he merely projects his fears into his visual experience and this deed results in a linguistic formation ("giant" metaphor) that can be regarded neither true nor false. The word "giant", however, that the "frightened primitive man made up to signifying his human fellow-being is indeed a metaphor in that is based on a correspondence between inner feelings of fear and outward properties of size."³ Objectively speaking, this metaphor can be challenged since the other man is not at all taller than the perceiver but viewing the same subjectively it can be regarded as sincere because in the eye of the frightened primitive man the other does look taller. Or rather: the statement may be faulty but it is no lie. It well "expresses" the inner experience, the fear of the primitive man. "The metaphor is blind, not because it distorts objective data, but because it presents as certain what is, in fact, a mere possibility."⁴ One can easily imagine that they are dangerous and can indeed attack and hit the frightened primitive man or they may not. By naming them giants his feeling is stiffened into a fact despite actually being only an assumption, fiction, or rather—with the words of the theory's author: a *figural state*. With Rousseau's example De Man proves that hierarchic structure of notions is built upon the basis of errors of sensual metaphors and their "blind passion", or if you like, upon formations that miss the fictional, textual element hiding in the nature of the existing they have called upon and feign to believe in their referential meaning.

The basis of the pyramid of metaphors—similarly to de Man—is seen by Nietzsche as being made of a sensual order of metaphors, or as he puts it: "primitive world of metaphors", which is constantly overlooked by man seeking truth, as only through this forgetfulness "can one live in slight peace, security and

² ROUSSEAU, J. J.: "Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité." In: *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond. Gallimard, Paris [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1964. vol. 3. 146–51.

³ DE MAN, Paul: „Metaphor (Second Discourse)". In: *Allegories of reading*. New Haven and London Yale University Press, 1979. 150–51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

in a consequent way.”⁵ And with the knowledge that he is “the axle of the world” around which the world turns. “Primitive metaphors” and “ancient forms” are called by Nietzsche “intuitive metaphors”, meaning that they work on turning external nerve stimuli into internal images and this transfer is “if not the mother but the grandmother of all notions”. It is not things that actually enter out conscience only their metaphors “as between two so greatly differing spheres as subject and object there is no causality, correctness and expression but only an *aesthetic* relationship between them.”⁶ Thus when we think that we know something about the things themselves, namely when we talk about trees, colors, snow and flowers we do not have anything else but the metaphors of these things and they are the least equivalent to the original core.”⁷ This figurative notion of recognition includes a violent gesture as well since the mind does not leave alone the (perceived) entities; rather it performs an operation of comparison on them. Or as Robbe-Grillet puts it: metaphors “create a constant relationship between the universe and humans”, they build some kind of “soul-bridge” between things and the perceiver.⁸ This gesture is obviously arbitrary as this “soul-bridge” is not a priori existing between the universe and humans. Even Aristotle regards this figurative “bridgework” as one of the main characteristics of human race, although if we accept this as true then the question arises: what is the origin of the desire controlling the “rhetoric” operation of recognition that can be called violent and authoritarian? The answer is obvious says de Man “as this is the only way in which it can constitute its own existence, its own ground. Entities, in themselves, are neither distinct nor defined; no one could say where one entity ends and where another begins.”⁹ A world turned into a meaningless, soulless impenetrable surface becomes a frightening force that we no longer control and to avoid this desperation we attach a “human face” to those not having a face. Otherwise it

⁵ „Nur durch das Vergessen jener primitiven Metapherwelt, nur durch das Hart- und Starr-Werden einer ursprünglich in hitziger Flüssigkeit aus dem Urvermögen menschlicher Phantasie hervorströmenden Bildermasse, nur durch den unbesiegbaren Glauben, diese Sonne, dieses Fenster, dieser Tisch sei eine Wahrheit an sich, kurz nur dadurch, dass der Mensch sich als Subjekt und zwar als künstlerisch schaffendes Subjekt vergisst, lebt er mit einiger Ruhe, Sicherheit und Konsequenz“. (NIETZSCHE, Friedrich: Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im ausselmoralischen sinne. In: Kritische Studienausgabe, Herausgegeben von Giorgio Golli und Mazzino Montinari. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag de Gruyter. 1988. Vol. 1. 883.) (my translation)

⁶ Ibid., 884.

⁷ Ibid., 879.

⁸ ROBBE-GRILLET, Alain: “Nature, Humanism, Tragédie”. In: *Pour un nouveau roman*. Les édition de Minuit, Paris, 1986. 48. (my translation)

⁹ DE MAN, Paul: „The Epistemology of Metaphor”. In: *Aesthetic ideology*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis / London, 1996. 44.

would be possible—a situation quite unbearable for man—that I am not more meaningful than—in fact equal with—a piece of stone and the world “affects me as the dark vision of organized chaos.”¹⁰ Anthropomorphization, attaching faces on the basis of similarity relations turn things into mirrors, where man sees his own image forming. As Robbe-Grillet says: “they have been tamed, they are calm and look onto man with his own look”¹¹ Human characteristics projected into nature by metaphors suggest that the world and I have the same soul, we share the same secret. That nature “exists within ourselves as well as in front of us.”¹² This is why formations of comparisons are never meek tralatitons but tools at hand for owning and taming the world.

Through close-ups the narrator of the novel *Film* builds a soul-bridge between the Olds and himself, which forces the relation of familiarities and similarities onto the not too far from few gestures of two extremely closed bodies. The Olds neither signal to nor communicate with the camera and narrator questioning them. They are strangers, unpossessable and their secret about the past—if they have any—is unknown to the analyzing eye. The close-ups that try to turn perceivers’ “outside” signs into “inside” ones forces the undominatable, the unknown, in this case the Olds into relations of similarity. This way close-ups make the speaker visible, who wants to measure everything by his own means, wants to include everything in his own world or as Beáta Thomka puts it: “close-ups, micro-perspectives (...) distortions of viewpoints (...) are never biases of the seeing organ, rather they are biases of the seeing person and the way he sees. In this way objectivity becomes pretence, the tool turning back to the seer, the speaker.”¹³ Close-ups and micro-closeness do not want to get to know the Olds, rather *expropriate* them through the metaphoric formations within focusing. The Old Man and the Old Woman do not give any deliberate signs and according to the narrator: they do not want to share their silence with us. For example, “there is no sign whatsoever” in the eyes of the Old Man “that we could read from”. (98–99) Despite all this the narrator’s often used and recurring expressions are “by all signs” and “as if” and through this he introduces the *nevertheless* interpretations of the Olds’ gestures. These interpretations are based on relations that put/places allegedly telltale signs parallel to gestures already

¹⁰ MÉSZÖLY Miklós: „Warhol kamerája – a tettenérés tanulságai.” [The Camera of Warhol – The Morales of being caught in the act] In: *A tágasság iskolája*. Szépirodalmi, Budapest, 1993. 137. (my translation)

¹¹ ROBBE-GRILLET: “Nature, Humanism, Tragédie”. 62.

¹² *Ibid.*, 51–52.

¹³ THOMKA Beáta: *Glosszárium* [Glossary]. Csokonai Kiadó, Debrecen, 2003. 22. (my translation)

seen, known and thought to be similar. We could say that he seizes the movements of the Olds but this violent interpretation does not tell about the secrets of the two bodies but the intentions waiting to be deciphered. All this, however, still suggests that the Olds and the narrator share some kind of knowledge. And this is reinforced by the so called “universal” order of analogies ordering different time and space level to each other as these comparisons are introduced as if they aimed at uncovering the sins of the Olds, while the truth about these allegations—due to the silence of witnesses—cannot be uncovered, and they only draw attention to the “suspicion” of the narrator. Seemingly the narrator is awaited by failures from two sides if he seeks for the possibility of knowing without biases: at the level of universal analogies and in the use of the micro-close (close-up) camera. We could say that the investigator-narrator is surrounded so much by these repeated anthropomorphic analogies that they uncover a whole metaphysical system he is unable to break out of.

But is really the role of comparison, or face-giving such a powerful force in getting to know and finding out the truth? I think that if the camera’s process of close-ups has any significance in the text in question then it can be determined exactly through the analysis of this question. The camera’s automatism “free of emphasis” promises that we can put aside our preconceptions by which we relate to things in everyday life, in other words: it is able to uncover such depths for the perceiver that we would only be able see by ignoring our mind’s recognizing categories. In this sense the camera’s view would be a pre-human view going beyond all orders brought or formerly recorded and determined by notions, mathematics, geometry, etc.; namely, embodying the hope that a secret pre-existence would be visible. According to Csaba Könczöl, Mészöly’s writings often include such intentions going beyond notions as “the writer consistently strives for remembering soul landscapes and emotional states that are beyond good or bad” – that is, beyond determined truths, ideologies and value judgments; and “he somehow suspends his conscience of an ‘ideologist’, and breaks away from his prejudices and dissolves all elements between the world and himself that are not incontestable and are not evident.”¹⁴

Mészöly himself in potentials essay *The Camera of Warhol – The Morales of being caught at the act* writes about the possibilities of camera viewpoints: “for a short period of time—as long as it is possible—we have become cameras. We have got a glimpse of such a raw mechanism of the happening view, that we usually decline to submerge (self-defense; we are ‘I’, and everything is ‘else’. And

¹⁴ KÖNCZÖL Csaba: “Rendezés vagy végrehajtás? [Directing or accomplishing?] (Mészöly Miklós: *Film*)”. In: *Tükörszoba*. Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986. 220. 230. (my translation)

what happens if we lose the 'I'? Who will notice and be affected by the 'else'? Even reality is lost." Furthermore, Mészöly indeed sees the role of the camera to *cut out metaphysical determinations*: "this is all what happens, when we consider everything by *cutting out metaphysical projections*. In spite of this the camera appearing in the text of *Film* seems to work differently than the automatic recording device described in the essay. Its most important function, the close-up, focusing—as I previously pointed out—does not penetrate the—the world missing human interpretation, nor does it show us this world's inhumanity, its chaotic nature and endless extraneity, but rather, it immediately names the unrecognizable partial image torn out of its context and writes it back into the "pyramid" of notions through a relation of similarity. We are not made to see things in their own reality but only their metaphors. So what is it that the camera allows us to see? "An army of ever-restructuring metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms, shortly: a summary of human relations".¹⁵ Mészöly's camera does not point beyond notions but outlines the *source* of notions, the "primitive" or in other words "intuitive" world of metaphors, where "external" stimuli (giving soul to the soulless) are transferred into a psychic order. In other words it closes-up on the moment when things turn into things and the world turns into the world for us. This way we get a close-up picture of the event of recognition, something we tend to forget about, namely the basis of human truths, the world of metaphors created in a "wild and spontaneous" way.

In this sense the camera is not the metaphor of the narrator but the signifier of the process, which the narrator—contrary to all of their intentions—is unable to evade and cut out. This way the camera becomes the *metaphor of metaphorization*, a formation of the process transferring "outside" stimuli to "inside" ones, which builds a soul-bridge between the world and a human. Or as Neil Postman says: the form of the media (e. g. camera) "are rather like metaphors, working by unobtrusive but powerful implication to enforce their special definitions of reality."¹⁶ The close-up process of the recording device puts the text's own metaphoric operation into focus, pointing out that as the narrator's intention to cut out all emphases and biases uncovers his own face-giving and world-taming proceedings, the showing of "universal analogies" does not lead the investigation to the suspected sinners (the Olds?) either, rather, it outlines the figure coining accusations. To sum, its main function is to reflect back on the viewpoint. Thus the text's process of close-up makes its own

¹⁵ NIETZSCHE: "Ueber Wahrheit..." 880.

¹⁶ POSTMAN, Neil: *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Penguin, New York, 1985. 10.

rhetoric proceedings universal and this way it draws the attention to the narrative determination of all laws, truths and foundations of accusations dedicated in language. In the words of de Man: "If the referent of a narrative is indeed the tropological structure of its discourse, then the narrative will be the attempt to account for this fact."¹⁷ Or if we wish to translate this statement to the language of the novel in question we can say that it is an attempt to account for why we can never get to know whether the Olds are guilty or not and whether they have anything to do with Silió's (other important character in the novel) existence beyond time and space, or not.

¹⁷ DE MAN: „The Epistemology of Metaphor.” 44.

Roland Orcsik

THE POETIC REFLECTION OF THE *GASTARBEITER* LANGUAGE (IVAN SLAMNIG AND ISTVÁN DOMONKOS)

The 'linguistic turn'

Let us start with a commonplace.

The question of language in the lyric discourses of the second half of the twentieth century admittedly belongs to the dominant characteristics of these discourses. During the period, it is often language, to be more exact, its mode of usage that reflects the world view of the poet. Following Wittgenstein, we can state that the frontiers of language have become the frontiers of the poem, or rather of the world of the poem.

In Croatian and Hungarian poetry, we can rank Ivan Slamnig and István Domonkos amongst the pioneers of 'linguistic poetry'. Both of them evolved their poetic oeuvres from being inspired by the intellectual currents of modernity, more precisely, by existentialism and by different avant-garde isms. They were the authors of the most important Ex-Yugoslavian literary organs after World War II: the *Krugovi* (1952–1958) in Zagreb and the *Új Symposion* (1965–1992) in Novi Sad. Resisting the socialist realist literature of the post-war era and thinking farther the experiments of modernity, they reached the quality of the neo-avantgarde and pre-postmodern linguistic literature. Cvjetko Milanja asserts the following about Slamnig:

What is in fact at issue here is the 'entrance' to 'linguistic' poetry, which I would rather call the poetry of the grammatological turn or the poetry of the semiotic modelative matrix.¹

Goran Rem, interpreting the modernity-post-modernity constructs, attributes two strategies to Slamnig:

¹ "Riječ je o 'ulazu' u 'jezičke' pjesnike, koju ja radije imenujem pjesništvo gramatološkog obrata, ili pjesništvo semiotičke modelativne matrice." Cvjetko Milanja, "Slamnig – Model književnosti," in Goran Rem ed., *OS slamnigu. Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa* (Osijek: Pedagoški fakultet, 2003), 22.

[...] on the one hand, a strategy which, after Ivšić, Pavlović, Stošić, prepares the turn of modernity into the post condition; on the other, a strategy which, with the above mentioned authors, but also with Mrkonjić, Vladović, Rogić, and Stojević, achieves the opening towards the post condition of modernity by itself.²

According to János Bányai, similar conclusions can be drawn concerning the activity of the authors of *Új Symposion*:

The understanding of the avant-garde tradition is at once a stepping out from the frames of this tradition because it indicates that the poetic (generic) norms and canons emerged in the historical avant-garde failed, as a consequence of which—as a consequence of this ‘understanding’—the beginning of a new tendency can be announced, which can be referred to as new ‘neo-avantgarde’ or (if not too early) as post-modernism.³

The main purpose of the present work is to explore how the problems of the ‘linguistic turn’ gain reflection in those poems of the two authors mentioned in the title which evoke the language of guest workers.

The traces of identity

It is clear from the above that both authors, from a certain perspective, started processes of separation from the modernity-paradigms of literature. This way, they have created a poetic language which appears to be unique in the discussed period. Actually, this language is oppositionist-natured; it gives the critique of a fossil, canonized literary conception. Slamnig, in one of his essays from 1958, defines contemporary poetry in a broad sense:

² “[...] one koja nakon Ivšića, Pavlovića, Stošića – priprema obrat modernizma u post stanje, i one koja opet zajedno s tim autorima, ali i Mrkonjićem, Vladovićem, Mraovićem, Rogićem i Stojevićem – izvodi sam ulazak u post stanje moderniteta.” Goran Rem, “Kvadrati tuge ili ekranizacija teksta,” in idem. ed., 79.

³ “Az avantgárd tradíció megértése egyben kilépés is e tradíció keretéből, mert jelzi, hogy a történeti avantgárdban kialakult poétikai – műfaji – normák és kánonok kimerültek, minek következtében – e »megértés« következtében – bejelenthető egy új – »neoavantgárdnak«, vagy (ha nem túl korai) posztmodernnek nevezhető irányzat.” János Bányai, “1965: A (poszt)modern fordulat éve?” in idem., *Hagyománytörés* (Újvidék: Forum, 1998), 92.

If we can at all talk about some kind of special difference between coteremporary poetry and the poetry of other periods, it means a tendency that gives voice to poetic elements which are considered to be subsidiary and left out from the everyday practice of speech.⁴

One of the young authors of contemporary Croatian poetry, Tvrtko Vuković pronounces critical views on the subject:

Slamnig was not able to carry out the project of demitologizing high, canonized poetry because his discourse was fundamentally determined by the borderline of the same, so called high literature.⁵

At the same time, it is questionable to what extent Slamnig intended to exceed the frames of high literature. If we take into consideration the extreme plentitude of his canonized verse forms and the consciously applied, dialogical intertextuality of his poems, we can come to the conclusion that he did not have such an intention. This is well supported by Slamnig's concept on the autonomy of literature and those who create it:

I believe that literature is something separate, that it, similarly to politics, works with language and texts, so with statements, either oral or written ones. However, there is one essential distinction; literary works own that difference and peculiarity for which, I think, it is necessary to make a stand.⁶

On the basis of all this, we can conclude that for Slamnig, the literary work means an autonomous linguistic work and, in this way, the formation of an

⁴ "A ako bi se moglo govoriti o nekoj posebnoj razlici između suvremene poezije i poezije drugih razdoblja, onda je to tendencija da u njoj dođu do izražaja oni zanemareni i usputni poetski elementi iz svakidašnje govorne prakse, ili iz djela, koja nisu službeno priznata poezijom." Ivan Slamnig, "Pristupanje suvremenoj poeziji," in idem., *Disciplina mašte* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1965), 190.

⁵ "Projekt demitologizacije visoke kanonizirane književnosti Slamnig nije mogao do kraja realizirati, jer je njegov diskurz bitno određen granicama polja te iste, tzv. visoke književnosti." Tvrtko Vuković, "Kulturalna vrijednost Slamnigove poezije," in Goran Rem ed., 29.

⁶ "Smatram da je književnost nešto posebno, da barata jezikom i tekstovima, dakle izjavama, bilo usmenima, bilo pisanima, slično kao politika, ali postoji jedna bitna razlika, postoji odjelitost i posebnost književnog rada na kojoj, ja mislim, treba inzistirati." Željko Ivanjek et al., "Ivan Slamnig o sebi i drugima," in Branimir Donat ed., *Književna kritika o Ivanu Slamnigu* (Zagreb: Dora Krupićeva, 2004), 191.

autonomous language at once. On the other hand, we will see that the aim of this autonomy is not to bring about novelty, but to work out its own distance, autonomy opposed to the familiar, canonized literary use of language by the employment of the well-known elements, inaccuracies, mistakes.

One of these creations, 'Slamnigisms' is the usage of the *Gastarbeiter* [guest-worker] language in the poetic discourse. The method is most palpably employed in his sixth volume, entitled *Dronta* (1981). Before this volume, his similar experiments got manifested in forms of collages. Krešimir Bagić refers to this earlier and to that later phenomena as the poetic policy of the 'babilonization of the text', by which he understands the following:

[This is a] powerful authorial gesture which—mixed into different linguistic fragmentaries and speech-idioms—collects the identical and contradictory civilizational meanings, and thus, it appears as a particular supplement, interpreter, or as the generator of new meanings.⁷

In his classification, he ranks the '*Gastarbeiter* poems' ("Mein Faterlant", "Der geschmurfte Kater", "Süssmunde von der Münze", "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten") amongst the so called 'macaronic experiments'. Jasmina Lukić conceives the *Gastarbeiter* texts as the following:

Slamnig bases his own phrases on the linguistic fragmentaries of the most manifold origin together with the new words, concepts created by himself, which he represents as a divergence formed in a new way as opposed to the accepted.⁸

And indeed, if we read Slamnig's guest-worker poems bearing these instructions in mind, we can recognize that due to the grammatic mistakes, a non-literary and unexpected language has actually come into existence here: "Der Fater reist nicht drüben, / möcht gern toch naskisch essen. / Die Sarma unt die Riebitze – / dass gibts nischit hier in Hessen."⁹ (*Mein Faterlant*). Thus, the

⁷ "[...] nadmoćnu autorsku gestu koja – umještanjem krhotina različitih jezika i govornih idioma – prikuplja podudaranje i proturječne civilizacijske smislove, nudeći se pritom kao njihov osobiti nadomjestak, interpretatni ili, pak, kao generator novih smislova." Krešimir Bagić, *Živi jezici* (Zagreb: Naklada MD, 1994), 41.

⁸ "Upravo na jezičkim krhotinama najraznorodnijeg porekla i uz pomoć novih reči i pojmova koje stvara on sam, Slamnig gradi svoje iskaze kao uvek na nov način ostvarene otklone od očekivanog." Jasmina Lukić, "Slamnigovski homo ludens," in Branimir Donat ed., 138.

⁹ Ivan Slamnig, *Dronta* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1981), 47.

dimension of mistake, opposed to the canonized laws, generates a poetic world view. The above quoted poem is also significant because it casts a different light on the concept of mother tongue as homeland:

Ich habe eine Heimat
unt die muss sehr schön sein,
mein Fater der sagt immer:
'Da arbeitet gaar kein'

Die Sprache ist wohl klingent,
die Mutti liept die sehr,
nicht wie die Sizilianerin
die schpircht Alienisch nischt mehr.¹⁰

The above lines prove how this poem reflects on its own substance, on its own world: on language. All the same, this language is not the home or residence of the authentic existence understood in the Heideggerian sense. This language is not a Hölderlinian poetic instrument even if it might propose the notion, suspicion of lack of existence. This language reflects the oblivion of identity through the oblivion of the mother tongue; it displays the instability of the "theatralized, lyric subject"¹¹ in a humorous, ironic way. The following mistake also refers to this alienated condition: Italianisch – Alienisch. In the word 'Alienisch', we can observe an English word as well: 'alien'. It bears the succeeding connotations: stranger, extra-terrestrial. So, on the one hand, there is humour, a ludist poetic game with language, languages; on the other hand, alienation is also there. Cvijetko Milanja perceives this as black humour:

[...] it seems to be humour for the reader, but a sort of black humour is a more precise phrasing since the author's anxiety about the debasement of the cultural and civilizational level is distinctly tangible.¹²

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ "teatraliziranog lirskog subjekta" Bagić, 33.

¹² "On nudi tom čitatelju humornost, ali bi bilo točnije reći neku vrstu crnog humora. Naime jasno je uočiti autorovu zabrinutost sniženošću kulturnoga i civilizacijskog nivoa, indeksirana makaronštinom." Cvjetko Milanja, "Slamnigovo kasno pjesništvo," in Goran Rem ed., 73.

, We can notice similar attitudes in the other *Gastarbeiter* poems of the author. Thus, for example, in the poem entitled “Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten”, identity gets negated, problematized:

Ja se rodih uz napor
gdje se lako rodio Heine.
Sivi vinorodni lapor
moji su bregi kraj Rajne.
[...]
Mein Schiff ist keine Sagina
mein Schiff ist eine Kogge,
und ich bin kein Dalmatiner
ehnti tschatschine Rogge.¹³

On the one hand, we encounter a Heineian intertextual subject here, who declares ‘I’ with confidence; on the other, we realize that this subject does not have its own language, instead, he speaks two languages full of mistakes; he is neither German nor Dalmatian and has no idea about what all this means. Slamnig’s influential fellow-poet, Zvonimir Mrkonjić calls this *Gastarbeiter* language as the “language in-between”,¹⁴ and the condition of being in-between is true for the identity of the lyric subject as well:

The dislocation of language and being dislocated from language,
the escape of identity and escaping from identity create the
Slamnigian verse more successfully than the quest of all these
[...].¹⁵

A comparable technique can be discerned at the Vojvodinian Hungarian poet, István Domonkos. Domonkos, being the co-operator of more journals published in Novi Sad—translator and member of the editorial staff at the literature section of the weekly *Ifjúság*, and at the supplement of the journal *Symposion* (1961–1963), and finally at *Új Symposion*—knew well the

¹³ Slamnig, *Dronta*, 50. On this poem cf. also Branko Kuna, “Pučki jezični slojevi Slamnigove poezije – između ludizma i estetizma,” in Goran Rem ed., 141.

¹⁴ “međujezikom” Zvonimir Mrkonjić, “Uvod u fundamentalnu drontologiju,” in Branimir Donat ed., 130.

¹⁵ “Iščašćenost (iz) jezika, bijeg (iz) identiteta uspješnije tvori Slamnigovu pjesmu nego potraga za njim [...]” Mrkonjić, 129.

contemporary Yugoslavian literatures, and therefore the works of the 'Krugovi' generations (or to use Slamnig's term, the 'cold-war' generations), too.¹⁶

Domonkos's *Gastarbeiter* poem bears the title "Kormányeltörésben" and may be his most frequently cited work as well. He consequently employs the infinitive here, establishing the "agrammatical linguistic model",¹⁷ the diction of the *Gastarbeiter* lyric subject. Nevertheless, his text had been written earlier than Slamnig's similar verses. The Vojvodinian author wrote "Kormányeltörésben" in Swiss emigration; he sent it to his poet-friend, Ottó Tolnai, who published it in the *Új symposion* in 1971 and later the same year, in the second volume of Domonkos, the *Áthúzott versek* edited by him. The South Slavic authors affronted this poem first in 1973, in the translation of Judita Šalgo.¹⁸

Despite the fact that Domonkos knew the contemporary Croatian poetry of the time well, we cannot state that he automatically adopted or imitated Slamnig's experiments, or vica versa. We can rather talk about a kind of synchronicity; both poets 'smelled' something in the air of the 'cold war'. So, my intention is not to demonstrate who influenced who, or who was the first and the second because I would not like to report about a poetic horse-race here. My chief concern is how Slamnig and Domonkos represent the *Gastarbeiter* linguistic word.

Irony and the irony of irony

If we take a look at the reception of Slamnig's *Gastarbeiter* poems, we can note that he most frequently emphasizes the irony stemming from the incorrect usage of language. Among others, Vlasta Markasović also talks about the author's ludist, ironic game:

¹⁶ István Lukács observes it correctly that "the Croatian 'Krugovian' turn remains unnoticeable in Hungary for a long time" ["hrvatski 'krugovaški' prevrat u Mađarskoj dugo neće biti zamijećen"]. István Lukács, "Hrvatska postmoderna književnost u Mađarskoj," in Goran Rem ed., 360. However, we must add that yet, in the literature of the Vojvodinian Hungarians, or rather in the *Symposionists*, the inspiration and ample reception of the 'Krugovians' could be felt. This is what is precisely testified, among others, by the works of István Domonkos, but unfortunately, the political situation in Hungary at that time did not allow for the recognition of this fact, and Hungary is still in debt for the discussion of the matter. (On *Új Symposion* and the South Slavic literary and artistic relations cf. Zoltán Virág, "A margó vándorai. Az *Új Symposion*ról," *Híd* 6 (2005): 41–62.

¹⁷ Magdolna Danyi, "Az agrammatikus nyelvi modell," *EX Symposion* 10–12 (1994): 9.

¹⁸ István Domonkos, *Ja biti*, Judita Šalgo trans. (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1973), 49–61.

Interlingual quotations, the collage of the linguistic matrix, the variety of the linguistic material applied independently from its origin, all contribute to the general ironic impression of this poetry. Slamnig's lyric subject is absolutely deprived of pathetism; moreover, it finds its pleasure in a pseudo-mediocrity. In some poems, it can even be regarded as a Švejkian 'simpleton'. Slamnig's lyric subject is an outsider pushed to the margin; however, it does not play unplugged by any means because by his salient ludism, the author amplifies his instrument—his language.¹⁹

Furthermore, it is also exciting how Zvonimir Mrkonjić compares the *Gastarbeiter* subjects of Slamnig and the Austrian poet, Ernst Jandl:

Whereas Jandl advances towards the gramatically stale Caspian language, which concretizes the subconscious and its power over writing, Slamnig shapes language by the corrosion of graphy, by the automatic humour of the transcription of the 'foreign' language and of the putting down of the 'how-you-speak'.²⁰

From this aspect, we can conclude that Slamnig's irony in these poems refers, on the one hand, to the canonized literary forms of speech;²¹ on the other, by the corrosion of graphy, to the loss of the authentic, stable identity. Although Slamnig's *Gastarbeiter* language talks about a loss, it does not do so by a tragic atmosphere, but by humour and irony, by a ludist linguistic game. So, in his poetry, the literary, intellectual standpoint still gets heightened somehow, which makes it possible for the author to keep an autonomous-literary distance from the represented.

¹⁹ "Interlingvalna citatnost, kolažiranje jezičkih matrica, obilje jezičnog materijala niveliranog bez obzira na podrijetlo pridonosi općem dojmu ironičnosti ove poezije. Slamnigov je lirski subjekt totalno depatetiziran, a čak i pseudomediokritetan. U nekim pjesmama on je čak i 'bedak' šejkovskog tipa. Njegov je lirski subjekt marginalac, ali nikako ne svira unplugged, jer bujnim ludizmom autor ojačava njegov instrument – jezik." Vlasta Markasović, "Ludističke paradigme u djelima Ivana Slamniga, Vanje Raduša i Dubravka Matakovića," in Goran Rem ed., 93.

²⁰ "Dok međutim Jandl ide prema gramatički zakržljalom kasparskom jeziku koji konkretizira nesusjesno i njegovu prevagu nad pisanjem, Slamnig razrađuje jezik korozijom grafije, automatskim humorom transkripcije 'stranog' jezika i pisanja 'kao što se govori'." Mrkonjić, 130.

²¹ In Mrkonjić's view, this *Gastarbeiter* language is "an alternative language which substitutes for the 'positive' literary language [...]" ["jednog alternativnog govora koji zamjenjuje 'pozitivni' književni jezik [...]]." Mrkonjić, 131.

In Domonkos's "Kormányeltörésben", we can also discover this staleness of language and identity. However, here, the possibility of any literary, intellectual distance gets negated, which, in my interpretation, is brought forth by the irony of the metatextual irony. According to Friedrich Schlegel, this double irony is less frequent and, among others, emerges in the following cases:

[...] wenn man nicht wieder aus der Ironie herauskommen kann, wie es in diesem Versuch über die Unverständlichkeit zu sein scheint; [...] wenn die Ironie wild wird, und sich gar nicht mehr regieren läßt."²²

Schlegel points out that the irony of irony reveals that Socratic irony—which provides the aristocratic attitude of the awareness of unawareness—still gets overwritten in certain cases. At Domonkos, the irony of irony serves the evasion of aristocratic distancing, whether the Socratic mode or the Slamnigian literary reflection is at issue. That is why we can find so many contradictory statements in the above mentioned poem of Domonkos, as Beáta Thomka also perceived it: "The contradictions in which the experience of the I being on the point of departing, retreating abounds necessarily ripen out the gestures of confutation."²³ Thomka mentions this precisely in relation to the self-determination of the lyric subject, which is repeated in the poem as its refrain: "én lenni" ["I to be"]. And the negation of this "lenni" ["to be"] appears as the negation of the lyric subject constituted by the poetic speech or writing: "ez nem lenni vers / én utánozni vers"²⁴ ["this not to be poem / I to imitate poem"]. Further on, this matter of the subject and the poem continues to be ironized: "vers lenni tócsa / beleülni lenni szivacs / tönkretenni új ruha"²⁵ ["poem to be puddle / to sit in it to be sponge / to spoil new clothes"]. Then, the following also reflects ironically on the ideological burn-out of the subject:

tócsában találni
sok kövér kukac
proletariátusnak
proletariátus jövőbe veti horgát

[to find in the puddle
a lot of fat worms
for the proletariat
the proletariat throws its hook off
to the future

²² "[...] wenn man nicht wieder aus der Ironie herauskommen kann, wie es in diesem Versuch über die Unverständlichkeit zu sein scheint; [...] wenn die Ironie wild wird, und sich gar nicht mehr regieren läßt." Friedrich Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und kritiken I*. (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967), 369.

²³ "Az ellentmondások, melyekből oly bőven kijut a távozóban, távolodóban lévő én tapasztalataiban, szükségképpen a tagadás, cáfolás gesztusait érelik ki." Beáta Thomka, *Tolnai Ottó* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 1994), 41.

²⁴ István Domonkos, *Áthúzott versek* (Újvidék: Symposion Könyvek 31, 1971), 81.

²⁵ *ibid.*

fogni fürdőszoba
vers lenni kérdezni:
bírní el pici egér
hátán egész-ház
ha bebújni lyuk?²⁶

to catch bathroom
poem to be to ask
to hold little mouse
on its back whole house
if to get into hole?]

The title of the poem itself also refers to this loss of identity, to this emptiness of the subject. By the way, the Serbian translator of the poem, Judita Šalgo could not translate the title of the poem exactly. Moreover, she gratuitously omitted all of its paratexts, mottoes. The original title is untranslatable because, among others, it refers to an Old Hungarian literary text. The Hungarian word 'kormányeltörésben' [being with a broken steering-wheel] comes from the poem marked as number nine of the Hungarian Renaissance poet, Bálint Balassi. As we know, this word was not used at the time of Balassi that is why we presume that it is the poet's own compound. It involves the following connotations: the breaking of a steering-wheel, which symbolically refers to the aimlessness of a life deprived of love.²⁷ In other words, it refers to the loss of direction and to the meaninglessness of life. This is related to the *Gastarbeiter* language, conceived as existence in the poem. László Végel claims the following concerning the matter: "[...] Domokos, in a peculiar way, also denies this language. [...] The relieving elements of "Kormányeltörésben" are manifested by the irony of irony"²⁸ due to the fact that this freedom does not appear as completeness, but only as possibility. This is the reason why I think that Schlegel's concept of 'the irony of irony' is more relevant here since it contains all the contradiction that provides high tension for the poem of Domonkos. Accepting the contradictions, the subject becomes active and passive at the same time; it wriggles between the flux of speech and its negation.

Péter H. Nagy ascribes the following role to Domonkos's poem in the history of Hungarian literature:

[...] "Kormányeltörésben" outlines a poetic situation which makes us aware of the experience of the turn of the lyric language, but it can also be read from the expectations of the previous period.²⁹

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Balassi's concept of love has its origin in the tradition of the Petrarchian poetry.

²⁸ "[...] Domonkos ezt a nyelvet sajátos módon meg is tagadja. [...] A *Kormányeltörésben* felszabadító elemeit a tagadás tagadása jelenti." László Végel, "A metafizikától a bele nem egyezés eposzáig," in *idem.*, *A vers kihívása* (Újvidék: Forum, 1975), 123–4.

²⁹ "[...] a *Kormányeltörésben* olyan poétikai szituációt körvonalaz, amely már tudatosítja a líranyelvi fordulat tapasztalatát, de olvasható az azt megelőző periódus elvárásai felől is." Péter H. Nagy, "Identitásképző csataterék," *Alföld* 2 (2002): 53.

Domonkos's poem does not present a Hegelian dialectical process or a Thomas Kuhnian change of paradigm, but it precisely unveils how the different, simultaneously operating scientific, ideological paradigms eat up the individual with a viscerated identity, depriving it from the possibility of any free choice. With a little Marxist or post-structuralist echo, we can say that this poem uncovers the ideological process of identity production. The *Gastarbeiter* lyric subject denies ideologies from this aspect, but along with it, it also denies its own identity as the manifestation of the literary-poetic speech. By this and by the metatextual statements ("ez nem lenni vers") ["this not to be poem"], negation retreats to its avant-garde starting point; however, it has got disappointed from the utopicity so characteristic of avant-garde poetics and politics. All this makes it impossible for the poem to be pigeon-holed into any aesthetic paradigm without any problems, either in terms of modernity or post-modernity. This speech ominously reminds of the closed speech of the "philosophy of the dusty hole", where, according to Radomira Konstantinović's interpretation,

Language is an arbitrary link because, apart from itself, it, in fact, does not join anything; the word 'tree' will never become a tree just as the word 'justice' justice. So, if reality has invited me for speech, with its being an *outcast* from words, it is as if it only addressed me so that I can arrive at a revolt against language.³⁰

While Slamnig's irony provides an autonomous-literary distance keeping for the author, Domonkos's irony of irony negates any kind of possibility for distance. At the latter one, distance only appears as the desired possibility of freedom: "asszony lepedő ágy / clitoris / rátenni ujj / nem gondolni kollektív / nem gondolni privát"³¹ ["woman sheet bed / clitoris / to place finger on / not to think collective / not to think private"].

If we accept Branimir Bošnjak's interpretation that Slamnig is a "traveller in language",³² Domonkos's lyric subject is wandering around

³⁰ "proizvoljna veza zato što ništa stvarno ne povezuje, već povezuje samo sebe samog; reč drvo nikada neće postati drvo, kao što reč istina nikada neće postati i sama istina. Stvarnost, dakle, ako me je pozvala da govorim, ovim svojim izuzimanjem od reči, kao da me je pozivala samo zato da bih došao do pobune protiv reči" Radomira Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke* (Beograd: Nolit, 1991), 122.

³¹ Domonkos, *Áthúzott versek*, 82.

³² "putnik u jeziku" Branimir Bošnjak, "Ivan Slamnig: Karnevalizirani pluskvamperfekt i intertekstualnost tradicija," in Goran Rem ed., 35.

deprived of his face, purpose, and language “mint vasmacska nélkül gálya az tengerben”³³ [“as a galley on sea without an anchor”].

Having compared the two *Gastarbeiter* uses of language, we can come to the conclusion that Slamnig’s method refers to a literary alternative,³⁴ whereas in case of Domonkos, things are a little bit different. For him, the *Gastarbeiter* language is not an alternative, but the only possible and, quite paradoxically, impossible language at once, which is created by the self-destroying power of the irony of irony. That is why a tragic, purposeless world view gains more emphasis in him. Although humour appears here as well, it can on no account burst out in a relieving laughter since it contains a certain amount of bitterness. The only possible alternative can exclusively be suspected in the closing lines of his poem, where identity, the subject gets a chance in non-thinking (“nem gondolni kollektív / nem gondolni privát”) [“not to think collective / not to think private”]. Of course, the question is whether this is possible at all. And if yes, in what ways can this freedom be articulated when the essentially ideological speech or language is incapable of this?

Translated by Zsuzsanna Maczák

³³ From the motto of Domonkos’s poem, where he quotes Bálint Balassi’s mentioned poem.

³⁴ Cf. Mrkonjić, 131.

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FASHION FIGURES
TEXTUALLY MANIFESTING FASHION CODES AS FIGURES
IN WILLIAM GIBSON'S *PATTERN RECOGNITION*

*He wears something like a mailman's pouch,
slung across his chest. Shorts, she thinks,
drawing abreast of this trio, are somehow
always wrong in London.*¹ (28)

Cayce Pollard, the protagonist of William Gibson's novel, *Pattern Recognition*, is a coolhunter, someone who recognizes the thin line that separates the cool-to-be from the flash fads. She has an extraordinary allergy to trade marks, brand names, and fashion, which makes her an expert of spotting what will become fashionable; a talent by the help of which design firms can decide what to focus on. She is a member of an Internet community that collects and speculates on a lengthy series of short film clips referred to as the 'footage'. The clips are deposited on the World Wide Web, at unusual places, and there are big debates on deciding how many creators are working on them; whether they show a work-in-progress with a continuously building narrative; or whether they are clips of an already existing film. Cayce is one of the most respected contributors of the footage web discussion on the "Fetish: Footage: Forum". The novel follows her adventures from arriving in London up to the point of giving her opinion on a logo redesign for a company that manufactures athletic shoes. Pollard soon finds herself hired for finding the mastermind behind the footage. The owner of the fashionable advertising agency is interested in the footage because he finds its cult-like expansion to be the key to a new way of product marketing. From this point on, the story follows Cayce Pollard through her quest, which takes her from London to Tokyo, then to London again, and finally to Moscow.

¹ William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (London: Penguin Books, 2003). All subsequent quotations are extracted from this edition. The page number of the quoted lines follows each quotation in brackets.

The novel has a strong emphasis on being contemporary with its reader. One of its episodes explains that the protagonist's adventures take place two years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the Twin Towers, near which her father was last seen before his disappearance. The reflection on this event does not come up anywhere else in the story; it stays linked to the memory of the missing father, which means that it is a small, chronological information, by the help of which the reader can locate the story somewhere in his or her recent past. The novel operates with a textual universe that explicitly relies on using functioning references to contemporary material culture, design, and fashion. This particular feature, this intentional referentiality stands in the focus of those negative critical reflections which argue that Gibson's earlier works, with their plots placed in the future, were much more powerful and intense, whereas this novel, set in 2002, is superficial and shallow. As one of the reader-critics puts it:

[...] Gibson wants us to believe that his finger is on the pulse of the cultural Zeitgeist, but his pop-art references both "high" (Rodeo Drive, Louis Vuitton, and countless mentions of Prada) and "low" (The Gap, Tommy Hilfiger) have all the staleness of an old issue of Marie Claire found in a dentist's office. [...] As a work of literature, it will surely resemble a musty time capsule within a couple of decades.²

Namely, the effort to create a discernibly current novel fails to be successful at the point where this kind of up-to-date context is generated by using elements of popular culture such as product names, trade marks, celebrity names, names of famous locations in the mentioned cities, and other reality effects exposed to a sign-circulation along the constant transposition to which we are used to referring to as fashion.

I understand fashion as a discursive communicational method which takes an active part in the social signifying process while motivating the complex investigation for recognizable marks and features by which we constantly read ourselves through our everyday lives. Following Gábor Klaniczay, I consider fashion to be the self-governing, but never truly independent order of signs, figures, and communication.³ I am interested in the development of a comparative interpretational methodology that could help in

² Spotlight customer review in *Subzero Blue Store* available:

<http://www.subzeroblue.com/store/index.php?Operation=CustomerReviews&ItemId=B0009GIDSQ&ReviewPage=17>, access: 31 January 2006.

³ Gábor Klaniczay, "Miért aktuális a divat?" in idem *Ellenkultúra a hetvenes-nyolcvanas években* (Budapest: Noran, 2003), 55–85.

reading literary texts which have their structures and rhetorical strategies influenced by the functioning characteristics of the signifying methods of fashion and by the textual manifestations of fashion codes.

Even though according to most critical reflections, *Pattern Recognition* is not Gibson's best novel, I think that its narrative and rhetorical strategies make it a representative text in this respect. Therefore, I do not intend to form an opinion concerning its place in contemporary canon; I would much rather like to focus on the tension between the referential and rhetorical potentials of the fashion codes applied in the text—i.e. on how the text can handle, and in what ways it can explicate this kind of tension; on how fashion as a discursive, social communicational surface and its operational characteristics affect the text that uses its codes.

He is wearing what Cayce takes to be a Paul Smith suit, more specifically the 118 jacket and the 11T trouser, cut from something black. In London this look seems to be about wearing many thousand pounds' worth of garments that appear to have never been worn before having been slept in, the night before. In New York he prefers to look as though he's just been detailed by a tight scrum of specialists. Different cultural parameters. (9)

Fashion, interpreted as the intertexture of sociocultural distinguishing mechanisms, marks out its own connotative sphere to which it is related metonymically, and it is able to represent the individual embodied in the text by its help as a complex paradigm. To create the image of the person whose appearance is described in the above quotation, one can only rely on the reality effects⁴ the text offers. The brand name 'Paul Smith' could be recognized; the item-codes of the jacket and the trousers perhaps; and the oddity of the different looks of London and New York; however, all possible reading strategies must necessarily involve some sort of relation or attitude towards fashion and its textual appearance. The intertextuality of the text creates an intercultural relational system which is essentially connected to the context of fashion.

The interesting contextual feature of the texts that—similarly to the one at issue—operate with popular cultural codes is that they 'pretend' to promise a metonymical substitution while they demonstrate that referentiality is doubtful since their codes are authentic, but not referential, concerning actual reality. These codes become codes only through the rhetoric decisions of a reader. A Paul Smith suit signifies exclusively in case the reader finds it signifying, and its

⁴ For the term 'reality effect' cf. Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

significance points no further than the actual textual universe. Since in culture, everything circulates through communication and discourse, and every meaning formation involves interpretation, fashion—understood in a wider sense than its most visible manifestation, the fashion of clothing—follows the same discursive pattern and engages pieces of culture in its signifying process just like any other signifying mechanism.

My God, don't they know? This stuff is simulacra of simulacra of simulacra. A diluted tincture of Ralph Lauren, who had himself diluted the glory days of Brooks Brothers, who themselves had stepped on the product of Jermyn Street and Savile Row, favoring their ready-to-wear with liberal lashings of polo knit and regimental stripes. But Tommy surely is the null point, the black hole. (18)

The most important feature of the protagonist of the novel is that she developed an allergic reaction against trade marks and fashion in general. She escapes fashion by eliminating its main characteristic, the constant renewal of appearance. Her outfits resemble to some sort of uniform that could have been worn inconspicuously during any year between 1945 and 2000, with the primary feature that they consist of items from which all trade marks have been carefully removed. One of the things she likes in the footage is the characters' timeless clothing and chronotopical position. From her reality, overdosed with the vibrating circulation of signs of consumer goods, she escapes to a private minimalist world of stability, to a utopia that is safe from the pressures of consumer society. It is quite curious that while she suffers from the torrent of trade marks, she encourages their creation and renewal since her profession (to spot the cool-to-be) makes her activate her illness.

When approaching the figures of fashion in a literary text, it appears to be necessary to use the conceptions of cultural analysis in a comparative literary discourse together with the consideration of the differences in their approach of the subject and the debatable, if not doubtful possibility of their harmonization.

In the introduction to her sociological study, *Dress Codes*,⁵ Ruth B. Rubinstein points out the difference in social scientists', fiction writers', and fashion historians' approaches to fashion. Social scientists from the turn of the twentieth century are either interested in an implicit consideration of fashion while trying to cover up and understand the consumption patterns of different social classes, or they are trying to understand fashion as being the latest desired appearance, enabling the individual to pursue competing desires for group

⁵ Ruth P. Rubinstein, *Dress Codes. Meanings and Messages in American Culture* (Boulder-San Francisco-London: Westview Press, 1995)

identity and individual expression.⁶ Fashion historians usually discuss clothes in terms of aesthetic tastes and style of a particular period or of a particular group in society,⁷ and, as Rubinstein emphasizes, in contrast to social scientists or fashion historians, fiction writers typically imbue a specific image of clothing with meaning. She quotes Flaubert's description of Madame Bovary, where the character's clothing described at her first appearance basically revealed all the characteristics of her personality that led to future tragedies. The most important message of her outfit was that she was "fun-loving, frivolous, fashion-conscious and out of place."⁸ Namely, when a text operates with descriptions of a character's clothes not just in terms of listing established items of clothing (such as trousers, ties, or shoes), but also reflects on their features (such as colour, cut, material, or trade mark), it lifts these messages into its context as narrative and rhetorical structuring elements.

The early twentieth-century social scientists agree in the fact that the social manifestations of fashion are signs and that their cycle indicates a certain communicational model, a parlance organized along some specific rules; however, their standpoints differ concerning what these rules truly are. The analytical logic of the structuralist theory engaged in the debate at the point where, along with the recognition of fashions, fashion's resemblance to language brought about the intention of developing the system of its signs within the framework of the Saussureian language system.⁹ Roland Barthes' analysis is perhaps the most frequently quoted and accepted theoretical work among the theorists of fashion; nevertheless, these quotations are almost always uncritically acknowledgeable and seldom step further, towards a critical reflection¹⁰. Even

⁶ Cf. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Hungarian edition: Thorstein Veblen: A dologtalan osztály elmélete (KJK Budapest 1975). Also cf. Georg Simmel's "Fashion". Hungarian edition: Georg Simmel, "A divat," in ed. Péter Somlai, *Válogatott társadalomelméleti tanulmányok*, Gábor Berényi and Virág Bognár trans. (Budapest: Gondolat, 1973), (473–507)

⁷ M. and A. Batterberry, *Fashion: The Mirror of History* (New York: Greenwich House, 1977); E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); A. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: Viking, 1978), quoted by Rubinstein, op. cit., (4). Hungarian works with similar approaches: Katalin F. Dózsa, *Letűnt idők, eltűnt divatok (1867–1945)* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1989); Margit Szilvitzky, *Az öltözködés rövid története* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó Vállalat, 1974); Erzsébet Ék, *Magyarországi viseletek: a honfoglalástól napjainkig* (Budapest: Littoria Könyvkiadó, 1994).

⁸ Rubinstein, op.cit., (4).

⁹ Cf. Roland Barthes's *Système de la Mode, Editions du Seuil*. Hungarian edition: Roland Barthes, *A divat mint rendszer*, Zsófia Mihalcsik trans. (Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 1999).

¹⁰ One of the few critical works on Barthes's fashion theory is by Jonathan Culler, "The Development of a Method: The Language of Fashion," in Diana Knight ed., *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 2000), 168–73.

Rubinstein's cited study is supported by a structuralist semiotical background. Her aim, to establish a systematic analysis of clothing images and meanings in American society, is preceded by the intention

[...] to define the basic constructs of the communication discourse system. This step entails identifying the language and vocabulary of the images that give shape to the contemporary discourse.¹¹

Fashion's resemblance to language is not the invention of the structuralist discourse; in fact, it is a constant element in the discourse of fashion history and theory. To support this, we can quote one of the most widely used fashion history books in Hungary, the *Képes divattörténet* [Illustrated Fashion History]:¹² "Az »öltözék titkos nyelve« kifejezés helyett [...] bátran használhatjuk az »öltözködés ékesszóló nyelve« kifejezést" ["Instead of using the expression 'the secret language of clothes', one can speak about the 'eloquent language of clothing' with perfect confidence."].¹³ Some literary theorists have pointed out that fashion's resemblance to language makes it as readable and important to read in everyday life as it is in case of literary texts.¹⁴ Conceding the approach of the category from this perspective, it is easily comprehensible that fashion does not manifest itself directly, but through a figurative replacement or substitution similar to language. This is the kind of resemblance that is highlighted in Nietzsche's following quotation of Cicero (*De oratore*, III.38.155.): "Just as clothes were originally invented for protection against cold; however, later on, they were used for the decoration and the ennoblement of the body, tropes also arose from a deficiency and were used later on frequently

¹¹ Rubinstein, op.cit., 6–7.

¹² Ljudmilla Kybalová et al., "Mi a divat?" in idem *Képes divattörténet. Az ókortól napjainkig*, Anikó Harmath trans. (Budapest: Corvina, 1974), 15–36.

¹³ Perfect examples could be found for the symbolic meanings of certain clothing items by the examination of the strict rules or even the dress laws which determined the dress codes of the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Roman senators, or the Medieval aristocracy. Most fashion histories explain the signifying abilities of costume by referring to it as something that can 'talk' about the individual or can even reveal secrets about the wearer. Although dress is one of the most individual inventions of culture, fashion that motivates its changes makes its individuality go along with a great desire for imitation at all times. The individual's aim, to imitate or copy others, represents the aim of self-stylization and of emphasizing inner emotions, characteristics, and spirit by external tools. Ibid., 15–36.

¹⁴ Cf. John Vignaux Smyth, "Fashion Theory," in idem *The Habit of Lying. Sacrificial Studies in Literature, Philosophy and Fashion Theory* (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2002), 155–93.

because they were delightful.” Nietzsche cites Cicero in his *Rhetoric Course*,¹⁵ the text of which is quoted by Paul de Man in his *Rhetoric of Tropes*.¹⁶ My conceptions about the rhetoric operation of fashion signs, understood as signs that function in a language-like sphere of communication, can be clarified through de Man’s, and in connection with it, (metonymically) through Nietzsche’s understanding of the rhetoricity of language.

According to de Man, one of the main points of Nietzsche’s study of rhetoric is that

[...] the trope is not a derived, marginal, or aberrant form of language, but the linguistic paradigm par excellence. The figurative structure is not one linguistic mode among others, but it characterizes language as such.¹⁷

The textually manifesting fashion codes, alike figures in a Nietzschean sense, are not derivated, but are essentially structuring the texts they are in. During their deciphering, we can ignore neither their figural nor their referential meanings. They enter the texts as reality effects, carrying a relevant referential meaning, but by constantly moving over their textual boundaries, they express their connotative sphere, like figures. By their functioning method, they are able to define the intertextual relationship existing between different cultural layers. The textual appearance of the most discernible field of popular culture favours—by the employment of reality effects—a kind of metonymical meaning formation through which the elements of reality applied in a fictive sphere start to function as the simulacra of the experience of a reality close to the actual reality of the recipient.

Engaging the de Manian rhetoric theory in a reading together with an interdisciplinary and intertextual interpretation that uses the conceptions of cultural analysis is not possible without some reflections on the highly problematical reconciliation of the two aspects. Although rhetoric and a comparative interpretation presume each other, they stand in contradiction as well. On the one hand, reflecting on rhetoric always supposes a comparative gesture; however, on the other hand, the prevailing and inevitable referentiality of a

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Retorika,” Farkas Zsolt trans., in Thomka Beáta ed., *Az irodalom elméletei IV.* (Pécs: Jelenkor, 1997), 5–49.

¹⁶ Paul De Man, “Rhetoric of Tropes,” in idem., *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1979) 103–8.

¹⁷ De Man, op.cit., 108.

comparative examination is bound to pass by rhetoric understood in the de Manian sense to be able to validate its logical-grammatical procedures and methods.¹⁸

CPU's for the meeting, reflected in the window of a Soho specialist in mod paraphernalia, are a fresh Fruit T-shirt, her black Buzz Rickson's MA-1, anonymous black skirt from a Tulsa thrift, the black leggings she'd worn for Pilates, black Harajuku schoolgirl shoes. Her purse-analog is an envelope of black East German laminate, purchased on eBay—if not actual Stasi-issue then well in the ballpark. (8)

Dorotea may have attempted to out-minimalize her this morning, Cayce decides. If so, it hasn't worked. Dorotea's black dress, for all its apparent simplicity, is still trying to say several things at once, probably in at least three languages. Cayce has hung her Buzz Rickson's over the back of her chair, and now she catches Dorotea looking at it. (10)

The tension between the two approaches actively govern the reading of fashion's textual appearances that function as codes and figures at the same time. The above quotations, describing the outfits of the protagonist and of a 'negative' character, use some codes that can be read referentially, and according to the semiological reading of these signs, they are open for denotation and understanding within the clear and decipherable system of fashion. Nevertheless, a "fresh Fruit T-shirt" or the "Harajuku schoolgirl shoes" signify only if a recipient finds them signifying, and even if so, they signify solely in the way the recipient, who finds these codes being parts of his or her reality, understands them.

The transformation of these codes into signs is a result of an extremely long and complicated process of interpretation within fashion, which is intentional in as much as it is subjective. The participation of even the most common and obvious-seeming element of the actual reality as a sign in a literary text is always preceded by a series of tropic *deplacements* and *replacements*; therefore, its interpretation must necessarily involve a rhetoric approach. Consequently, if a reality effect enters a text as a code, it cannot necessarily be clearly and unambiguously decoded as well. Fashion is a discursive communicational method that appears through a language-like significational

¹⁸ I would like to thank András Müllner for drawing my attention to the lack of self-reflection of the actual discourse, which is trying to create some sort of balance on "the see-saw of textuality contra referentiality".

process. Its ontologically rhetorical manifestation through constant substitution is another feature that makes it a signifying system similar to language. However, it could be useful to reconsider the comparative interpretational approach of fashion from the aspect of the de Manian comprehension of the immanent rhetoricity of language. Since the comparison to language forms part of the theory of fashion from the earliest times, it can be easily understood that their resemblance most obviously appears in their tropological manifestation.

"Harajuku schoolgirl shoes" does not only refer to a certain part of a school uniform that is worn by Japanese schoolgirls, but it is also a trope that stands for the large, abstract, connotative sphere of the 'Japanese schoolgirl' as the icon of most sexual fetish-fantasies of Japanese men. As a trope, it also stands for an exotic tourist-attracting spectacle in Harajuku, Tokyo, where these girls gather in small groups, and they change their uniforms to the most shocking and artistic outfits that Japanese gothics, punks, or surreals can imagine. Through these metonymical references "Harajuku schoolgirl shoes" suggests unusual simplicity in this text. It motivates a different code-reading from the one that identifies clothes by trade marks and designer names since its connotations create a metonymical link to a special subculture of Japanese popular culture and to a subculture that idealizes Japanese popular culture. The quoted text uses this particular item of clothing in a context that stresses the damaging psychical effects of fashion on the protagonist, who tries to avoid it by wearing clothes that are not in connotative relationship with the fashion surrounding her. All the same, her aspiration to escape fashion cannot be successful and is crowded with contradictions. First of all, as it was mentioned earlier in my paper, the protagonist herself contributes to the constant development of fashion, which has damaging effects on her psyche since Pollard herself makes her living from the ceaseless trade-mark expansion. Apart from this, it is quite apparent that the character cannot ever escape fashion in dress since the term 'fashion' does not only refer to the serial-products of commercial culture, but it also stands for the constitution of distinguishing features, the two basic components of which are the imitation and exploration of new signs of differentiation. From this perspective, it is not at all surprising that clothing-ideologies, avantgarde art-movements, or anti-culture programmes, all of which proclaimed themselves as alternatives for the popular or the commercial, have ended up as fashion.¹⁹ According to the emphasis of the text, by her choice of outfits and other parts of her material surroundings, Cayce Pollard has an endless desire to differentiate, and thus, implicitly, she is always in the phase of *making* fashion. As the text ironically reflects on it, "She's a design-free zone, a one-woman school of anti whose very austerity periodically threatens to spawn its own cult." (8).

¹⁹ Klaniczay, op.cit. 55.



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Zoltán Lengyel

BLESSED TO GO ON TO STOP
COMMENTS ON BECKETT AND WITTGENSTEIN

*Die Kunst, gegen die Tatsachen zu existieren, sagt Oehler, ist
die Kunst, die die schwierigste est.*

Thomas Bernhard, *Gehen*

Methodological Preoccupations

What is the purpose and what is the sense of writing commentary literature, if it has any? Of writing texts about texts? My conviction is that its main sense is to introduce the (will-be) reader to the possible purifying joy (really “cathartic” joy) of the attentive and self-giving reading of literary-philosophical works. Or at least to give a hint at the possibility of that joy of reading. Its purpose is on no account to solve problems but to create and relativize problems. To anticipate the form of questions that which can sensibly be asked from the reading experience. To expose the so-called “primary” text’s intellectual strength.

It can expose that strength as long as it has its own “primary” intellectual strength of a similar nature (if not necessarily and not possibly of similar intensity) as that of the so-called “primary” text. The organised and structured (thus not, in any way, “chronological”) documentation of the reading experience thus should comprehend and not “apply”, but rather *get woven into*, and via this interwoven texture from word to word, step by step indirectly introduce the (will-be) reader to the language use of the so-called “primary” text. Its purpose is in no way to make the work of reading easier by preparing the ground and by explaining (away) the text’s (imagined) structure, but to show the real difficulty of the work of reading by speaking a language compatible with that of the “primary” text(s).

In order to create such commentary that prefers and performs the above tasks it is indispensable to get into a position of possible conversation with the commented texts, and thus it is essential to establish a mediatory layer of language use. In the case of the theme of this paper a touch of compressed enigmatic clarity (Wittgenstein) and that of the interweaving motion of voices (of the different inner integrated personalities; Beckett) will be *indispensable* in

order to get closer to the works, i.e. in order to let the real difficulties and problems of these works reveal themselves, showing themselves off. And also to avoid using quotes from the texts as demonstrative proofs, as dead material. I treat these writings rather as living and unfinished but fixed fragments of speech, and thus I attempt to initiate a dialogic/dialectic discourse which is itself unfinished and indefinite, being in the process of becoming. In order to do so it is necessary to have some common ground of language use, a no man's land of an in-between discourse which is neither one nor the other, neither the commented text nor the commentary, but which nonetheless partakes in both. Laconic clarity is necessarily adopted as a subjective philosophical value while the uncertainty of the speaking subject uttering logical propositions is a necessarily adopted poetic virtue. These are not such methodological devices that I consciously tried to assert in advance, i.e. their eminence is not the outcome of a pre-formulated plan. I was, so to speak, compelled to use these forms of speech, as any given and fixed taxonomies and interpretative strategies seemed inappropriate and would result in the falsification of the original thought of the essay. In case I would have tried to strip off these imitative (sometimes parodic, paraphrasing or analogical) layers of my work in order to create a neutral and objective use of language, I would have easily been caught up in a paralogic but isolated discourse imagining itself making valid and demonstrable propositions. And naturally this danger of imagined objectivity and authoritative interpretation is constantly present in writing commentary literature. This danger from time to time takes the form of a temptation (of speaking in a certain way in a certain position with scientific certainty) that should be resisted in order to fulfil the task of commentary literature which I sketched in the first two paragraphs. These two here over-simplified qualities (philosophical compression and poetic uncertainty) carry the danger of contradiction when I have to try to continuously and simultaneously pay high attention to both of them – thus the essay will serve as an experiment of how to reconcile and balance these aspects, too.

To make myself clear: I propose that the (however problematic and uncertain) essay is the appropriate form for commentary literature and that the demonstrative and refutative discourse borrowed from natural sciences falls short right at the outset because its voice is not integrable with poetic and philosophical saying. This proposition will not be demonstrated as it cannot be: doing so would run against the proposition itself. This essay itself as a whole and as an experiment is meant to serve as a supporting force for this proposition.

But all this does not mean at all that the sentences of this essay will leap out of, or in some way or the other evade logic; I do not think anyway that it is possible for language to do so. All this attempt of saying differently (or

alternatively to demonstration/refutation, assertion/negation) means that the argumentation of the essay will accentuate and use certain tools of logic, or, to put it differently and perhaps more precisely, the argumentation will obey certain set of logical and rhetorical rules such as analogy, paralogy, paraphrase, etc. To use the metaphoricism of sight: the essay tries to give a kaleidoscope-like picture of the problematic by showing different aspects simultaneously (here one after the other, due to the medium of writing) and without architectonic hierarchy, as opposed to the microscope or the telescope which is directed on a limited whole and is designed to give an exact, objective, observable picture.

As I have already mentioned, this paper is a structured documentation of the reading experience and not a linear treatise of the works of the two authors. I found this form the most appropriate to approach these writings, as it may hopefully be able to preserve more or less the infinite and inconclusive tension created by the reading of the texts, as opposed to a linear demonstrative argument which would try to close and cut off any outside space for interrogation, for possible continuation.

In a way, each of the numbered sections begins again and again to untie the weave of the whole problematic and each of them concludes by maximally exhausting its own intellectual possibilities. Each of the sections sets a new problem but they all serve only to set *the* problem. The arrangement of the sections is thus not arbitrary or contingent. The sequence is built on a logic that is the following: the central thought in each section is being pursued to its limits of comprehensible sense and the thought of the next section is the outcome of what is left of this game of "vivisection".

The dividing branches of the argument of this essay are centred around a single and simple thought: life is utterly and strictly inexpressible and it is a blessing that it is. To be more explicit: Beckett and Wittgenstein get hitherto the furthest in pursuing the project of modern philosophy and literature to its edge – the essentially self-relativizing and self-annihilating project which always already tries to point towards what is beyond its means: the strictly *inexpressible* nature of life. Life is a source and an end to which no conceptual apparatus can bring us closer; a way of doing philosophy and literature can manage at its best to more or less rightly *measure the distance* between the logical-conceptual-topological system (the system of the philosophical treatise and that of the literary text) and life. Such a way of doing philosophy and literature would be to try to become contemporary with life – which is a project that has no end, as life is what pre-structures time and space. Thus the negative and self-critical role will be decisive in philosophical and literary praxis, and their living discourse will be essentially and necessarily indirect.

All the following lines of argument strive to point to the thesis summarised in the above paragraph. It is the main point of the paper.)

Introduction

The works of Samuel Beckett and Ludwig Wittgenstein direct our attention prominently to the blessedness of life, to the joy of life. To live is to be blessed, that is: to be given a gift.

What is significantly similar in the works of these authors is that the blessedness and joy occur in writing and in thinking as total and strict inexpressibility. [It]¹ is not a pitch-note but silence. At least on the acoustic and intellectual level. The visual-physical aspect of the speech-silence, expressibility-inexpressibility pairs is tendentially described by kinaesthetic metaphors, especially by those concerning the different modes of humane locomotion. By applying these pairings (speech/go, silence/stop) and by highlighting the problem of inexpressibility the texts follow a philosophical-literary tradition; in this essay, for the sake of sharpening the problem, I shall turn for evidence to the founding texts of modern philosophy and literature: to the writings of Augustine, the inventor of modern subjectivity and strict agnosticism in relation to Wittgenstein (this relation is exposed mainly in section IV), to Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations* and to Dante's *Comedy* in relation to Beckett (exposed mainly in sections I and III).

The inexpressible, i.e. the reference point for the self-destruction and self-relativization of philosophy and literature is thus seen here as the ultimate projective of modern philosophy and literature: their discourse is structurally open – their ultimate reference point remains and must remain outside or beyond their system in order to keep the system working on, going on.

My working-hypothesis is that both oeuvres have their crystallizing points: for Beckett's it is *The Trilogy* and for Wittgenstein's the *Tractatus*. Both of these texts culminate in a state of paralysis or at a certain self-limitation: nothing else can be said; only silence remains. They are crystal-like and thus from the perspective of an artist-aesthetics or production-aesthetics they are closed and conclusive. But, evidently, from the reader's point of view they re-open again and again with every instance of the action of reading. I try to commemorate the experience of reading by asserting the latter aspect, thus the aesthetics of reception becomes accentuated.

¹ I use square brackets throughout this paper (with the exceptions of providing the originals of translations and indicating ellipsis: [...]) to indicate the absolute vagueness of the words (mostly pronouns) between them. Not in lack of better term, but in lack of any term. These are grammatical holes.

The articulation of my comments on Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* will require an indirect use of speech. *To speak about silence is contradictio in adiectio*.

We may maintain, as does Martin Heidegger about *Gehör, Gehören*² (listening, remaining/going silent), that silence is a modus of speech: that would stand in family relation to propositions like '<<to stop/stand>> is a variant of <<to go>>', and, to extend the analogy, 'death/being unborn is a modification of life' (which Heidegger himself would have possibly been the last to propose directly). Briefly, it would require giving prominence to one (emphatically the positive, assertive one) of these complementary aspects.

Those texts on which I make my comments would not fit into this logic. If they recognize the structural and existential precedence of [anything] at all, it would be that of silence and listening, that of calm, which serves as an absconded point of departure or structuring force of any discursive activity and which remains unseen, unheard and intangible within the discursive boundaries. [It] can be only grasped as absence; which is, of course, a contradiction in terms: if you can conceive barely the absence of something then you can have no idea of the thing itself. No negative theology would ever bring you closer to an affirmative definition of the concept of God, for instance.

This recognition at the outset eliminates the possibility of *direct* constative statements and propositions about and of silence that would have sense. The *indirectness* consists exactly in this: we are capable to speak solely about the absence of the word proper (the Word), and in the end we are not able to speak even about that either, but we find ourselves still speaking.

As if we were compelled to speak about our inability to determine the nature of our loss.

I shall call par excellence literary and philosophical discourse that which has the inexpressible as its solely enduring obsession. The modes and variations of approaching the inexpressible, however, themselves resist fixation (of any pre-established taxonomy), though they are numerous, potentially infinite. (To cite Malone, the speaker of the second part of the *Trilogy*: "The forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief from its formlessness."³ (181)) The two basic names for approaching or staring at and being amused at the inexpressible are philosophy and literature (a third could be named religion). It is useful to see how these two terms relate to one another in order to make clear how I apply them.

² Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 36. §

³ Samuel Beckett. "Malone Dies". (Trans. from French by the author.) In *The Beckett Trilogy*. London: Picador, Pan Books, 1979 (1951). 163-264.

The first coherent and extensive corpus founding "Western" philosophy (and philosophy itself is a "Western" term) is the work of Plato. Plato's dialogues present philosophy as being always in the making: the elaboration of concepts and opinions is always embedded in a dramatic and fictitious situation. Philosophy is a work in progress. It is important to be conscious of the fact that there is not a single thought in the dialogues which is directly referred to by Plato. The indirect mode of communication is essential to the dialogues' philosophical meaning; that indirectness which in modern terms is attributed to literature. Even Socrates could not be equated with the author; an equation so often done by scholar readers. Plato did not write philosophical treatises.

In the dialogue *Phaedrus* Socrates says to Phaedrus that the name "philosopher" should be attributed to someone on the ground of what s/he is striving for, of what s/he tries to approximate: thus accentuating the *philia*-aspect and presenting philosophy as essentially unfinished, a living discourse, speech (as opposed to the dead and fixed writing; see *Phaedrus* 278d). But the dialogues themselves are in written form which produces a curious anomaly: the indirect form and the content of Plato's works suggest that the works themselves are written to have been overcome by the reader, and philosophy itself starts to exist so to speak where the fixed writing ends. The dialogues even in their very literary genre point to a possible continuation beyond themselves, a continuation that they do not contain.

The ground-making philosophy of the West, or more precisely the seeds of that philosophy were written in a dramatic-narrative literary form. Here the later-to-become modern schism and separation⁴ of philosophy and literature did not exist (in fact, the term "literature" did not exist). The fact that philosophy presents itself in what can now be called literary forms at its outset (think of Parmenides's elegies too) does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that philosophy and literature is one and the same, but that they meant to describe different aspects of the striving towards the inaccessible, the ever-renewing *Eros* of the ungraspable and inexpressible. Philosophy is the name of the activity itself (*philia* is action); literature is the name of the medium, of the form. While the former implies openness and infinity (the (imagined) approximation of the inexpressible formally can go on without end), the latter suggests closeness, finiteness, the necessity of an end (as there is materially a punctual end of every form of writing). That is how I use these terms. (I will use the term "art" here synonymously with "literature"; literature is written art.)

⁴ The isolation is artificial and theoretic. Augustine's *Confessions* is autobiographical literature, agnostic philosophy and anti-Manichean theology. Dante's *Comedy* contains a wholly-developed and sophisticated philosophical and ethical system. These are just two important examples. Of course there are several other trends or even periods when the isolation is more emphasized than the relatedness.

The term "modern" is being used to distinguish philosophy and literature after Christ from classical (basically Greek) philosophy. The projective of modern philosophy from Augustine through Descartes to Kant was to limit the field of possible knowledge. Basically it is an epistemological and a methodological quest. To define what is knowable one has to have a concept (however obscure, imagined or even comic) of the inconceivable, the unintelligible, the unspeakable. The obsession with ineffability (though it has some remote traces in Greek philosophy) is the result of the strong Jewish, Eastern impact accompanying the spread of Christianity in Europe. In the Torah to the ever-inquiring Moses, who wants to know who his God is, replies JHWH with divine humour: I am who I am. (The daimonic experience of Socrates is of analogous nature: the daimon, the inner signs with its silence, it marks exclusively negatively. But that is only analogous: while the daimon is specifically interior, JHWH resides both in the exterior and the interior, and, in a way, in neither of them.) The taboo and even the inconceivability of the name begin to obsess European philosophy after that impact, so that is the reason for using the category of modernity.

Arthur Schopenhauer defines going (*Gehen*) as a continuous effort to prevent falling.⁵ Analogously to this idea, it is possible to conceive speech as a continuous effort to prevent silence (falling into silence).

The metaphors signifying the procedure (this word itself is such a metaphor) of thinking and speaking in philosophical and literary texts are most often kinaesthetic expressions. Expressions signifying different modes of thought/speech and motion apparently cannot flee from each other.

The *topos* of the inexpressible and those uses of language which try to commemorate this inexpressibility frequently find themselves in getting articulated through kinaesthetic expressions. The compelling metaphoricism of these expressions (of which the simplest form in *The Unnamable* is "to go on") will turn out to be of central importance in the logic of the texts, thus I will try to treat this aspect with careful attention.

It seems that Schopenhauer's remark on going indicates an inclination to think of motion and speech from the light of calmness/motionlessness and silence, respectively. The perspective of Beckett's speaker(s) and narrator(s) is similar. It seems from this perspective that motion and speech presuppose or even are preconditioned by an undisturbed and ungraspable calmness and an unspeakable silence. *Its their ground to move*. That is, the privative, the negated, the absent concept (*nota bene*, however, that an unconceivable "concept") is the one grounding the discourse, creating the ground under my feet to go on.

⁵ Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Teil IV. 57.

Our working-questions thus should be the following: is there a similar ground for thinking? And what if one has (always) already disturbed this silence?/ is (always) already in motion? And is one able at all to disturb it, or is one able not to disturb it? (Though these questions soon turn out to be nonsensical within the boundaries of the epistemological quest. (This problem is exposed in section III and VI.)

(This idea is closely related to the condition of *sub specie aeterni* contemplation. (The expression “*sub specie aeterni*” is usually being translated as “from the perspective of eternity”, but it is equally possible to understand it as “under the species of eternity”. The two renderings refer to two different worldviews.) (This aspect will be worked out in section VI, too.))

* *

I set out with a retrospective approach: in order to contextualize the texts in the oeuvres I firstly sketch how their crucial problem concerning the inexpressible possesses other works of the authors. It is a sketch because I only want to hint at the significance of this problem by citing two examples (there would be numerous others, and later I shall turn to some of them, too).

The following fragments can provide a hint of how the commitment to silence proclaimed by the end of the *Tractatus* (7) exerts its influence on the re-emerging and ongoing investigations of Wittgenstein. I chose these fragments partly because I try to appeal right at the outset to the mentioned analogy of motion/calmness (paralysis) and speech/silence.

We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!⁶ (*Phil. Inv.* I./107, 46e)

The *preconceived idea* of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination [Betrachtung – L.Z.] round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated [Die Betrachtung muß gedreht werden – L.Z.], but about the fixed point of our real need.) (*Phil. Inv.* I./108, 46e)

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen=Philosophical Investigations*. (Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967 (1953).

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" ["Sprache" – L.Z.] has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another. (*Phil. Inv.* I./ 108, 46e) (all italics by the author)

The point of the real need remains fixed: the basic motive of the philosophical quest (investigations) remains to be the same as it was in the *Tractatus*. The inability to give account, to express the basic radical motive itself (i.e. the reason/compulsion to speak) leads to the inversion of (philosophical) language use, a shift to another language game which recognises the continuity of this shifting of language games itself, but this does not necessarily and also cannot result in totally different considerations. What is articulated in and through the *Investigations* is not and it cannot be an absolutely different worldview to that of the *Tractatus*. Except that "it" is always already in the plural: worldviews, language games, basic motives. The two language uses (that of the *Tractatus* and of the *Investigations*) have essential differences due to different terminologies and different syntax, but their internal structures remain "more or less related to one another".

It is a permanently emphasised thought in the Wittgensteinian corpus that what is essential is inexpressible. The difference though, or the shift of difference constantly in motion accompanying the direction of his notes and remarks is that while in the *Tractatus* this inexpressibility conclusively and rigidly states itself as something hidden, something remote or mystical, in his later reflections it starts to become essentially uncertain and the possibility arises that the inexpressibility is constantly present as evidence, as an unabolishable condition of life patterns and language games.

But, to use the expressions of the *Tractatus* it remains valid that in relation to the "higher" (6.4, 6.432), to "the mystical" (6.44, 6.45, 6.522) all this philosophical babble ("rumbling and roaring"⁷) is indifferent (and, to be sure, "the mystical" and "what is higher" are themselves instruments of this babble). That is, be whatever it may the nature of the inexpressibility, one cannot give account of it through words. The ladder, the architectonic system of the philosophical treatise is designed to be thrown away (6.54). A convincing illustration of this can be the remark in the Preface of *Investigations*: "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own." (*Phil. Inv.*, Xe)

As a matter of fact, you cannot even get to begin without them. (I mean thoughts of your own.) But you cannot get to begin within them either. The

⁷ Cf. this with the motto of *Tractatus*: "...and whatever a man knows, whatever is not mere rumbling and roaring that he has heard, can be said in three words." (Kürnberger)

two-faced aporia of *solus ipse* accompanies all the problem-raising done by philosophy.⁸

Friction-proof icy ground is the ideal accommodation for philosophy, for thought. There you freeze, you cannot stir, stay motionless, calm. To be able to set out for walking you have already *been (re)moved* from there. You have already *(re)moved yourself* from there. You are unable to stay there. But in some sense you are unable to start walking either, you are paralyzed, because *the picture holds you captive*.⁹

In Beckett's *Trilogy* there appears to be a similar description picturing the situation of helplessness, of inertia, of being frozen and paralysed, and at the same time the condition of constant flux and motion, of uncertainty. This condition is also the outcome of inexpressibility, of a silence of which one can give no account in words. In the first text in Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*, which is a contemporary in his prose to the *Trilogy* and is closest to it in its tracks of thought and vocabulary, the anonymous speaker sets out in the following way (and this can be regarded as a continuation of the thread lost and found in *The Unnamable*):

Suddenly, no, at last, long last, I couldn't any more, I couldn't go on. Someone said, You can't stay here. I couldn't stay there and I couldn't go on. I'll describe the place, that's unimportant. The top, very flat, of a mountain, no, a hill, but so wild, so wild, enough. [...]¹⁰

⁸ Let me copy here two fragments, without further comment on them and on solipsism here (in section I they will be treated at more length): "The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of my world." (*TLP*, 5.62) "But within, motionless, I can live, and utter me, for no ears but my own." (*The Unnamable*, 298) A remark all the same: I do not imply at all that these propositions say the same thing.

⁹ "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside of it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (*Phil. Inv.* 115, 48e, italics by the author)

Cf. this with the following passage by Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard): "But the bird in the cage, the fish on the beach, the invalid on his sickbed, and the prisoner in the narrowest prison cell are not as captive as the person who is captive in his conception of God, because, just as God is, the captivating conception is everywhere present and at every moment." Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. (Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong.) Princeton University Press. 484.

¹⁰ Samuel Beckett. *Texts for Nothing*. (Trans. from the original French by the author.) London: Calder and Boyars, 1974. p. 7.

The place where the speaker could not stay and from where [he] could not go on is a very flat top of a mountain, or of a hill. [He] found [himself] there suddenly (no) at last, long last. The attempt to describe the place is unimportant; it is clear that it is not possible to give a description, nevertheless it is attempted (it turns out later that it is a depth at the height of a mountain, underground, in the earth, a six feet under perspective: the dead speaker below, the living above). Of that [place] you could not get the picture, nevertheless, (or for this reason) *you are most tempted to picture its indescribability in words.*

Here it can already be seen how the connotations of speech (thought) and motion constantly informs and influences each other in Beckett's works, sometimes indistinguishably. The simplest form of such expressions is to "go on", which most frequently refer to both aspects. The speaker often reports either his inability to go on or his compelling drive to go on or most likely both. To go on speaking or to go on kinetically. These reports reopen again and again on a regression *ad infinitum*: the speaker comprehensibly speaking about his inability to speak while speaking, while being compelled to speak.

The *regressus* almost always takes the form of silence in *The Unnamable*. But what is remarkable that precisely this silence makes it possible for the voice to sound; silence is even more than a *conditio sine qua non* of speech: it precedes speech existentially; silence creates the possibility of speech.

The above introduction contains the seeds of the dividing branches of argumentation elaborated in the following sections: the aporia of being compelled and being unable to speak, to go on; the enhanced quality of silence, stillness and absence as being of utmost importance in the logic of the texts, etc. The empirical aspects of inexpressibility (the extreme experiences of fear, pain and joy) will be treated with exceptional focus in the first part of the conclusive VII section.

In summa: the following sections try to show the reason why the ineffable is the corner-stone of philosophical and literary modernity, and above all they try to point out that the texts of Beckett and Wittgenstein radicalizes the indefinable problem of inexpressibility precisely by treating it consequently as indefinable.

I.

(the method to set out; constant purgatorio)

The projective of modernity constantly and basically informs various layers of Beckett's work. Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and Dante's *Comedy*¹¹ are two apparent pretexts of the *Trilogy* (besides the continuously underlying biblical references). It is possible to read the text in the light of these two works. From time to time I shall appeal to this aspect of reading. In the passage below there is a concentrated presence of their reminiscences.

One starts things moving without a thought of how to stop them. In order to speak. One starts speaking as if it were possible to stop at will. It is better so. The search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is what enables the discourse to continue. (*The Unnamable*, 274)¹²

It seems that one presupposes the end (the possibility of an end, i.e. the logical fact of the end (cf. *TLP* 2.0121)) right at the outset. One cannot do otherwise; things must have started moving which contains the condition that they were without motion, and thus it is possible that they will stop (that one will be able to stop them). *As long as there is discourse flowing it is conditioned by an unending uninterrupted seeking for a "method" to stop.*

The discourse always already on method. Whether it is conscious or unconscious that this is the case, one, or rather I (to follow the shift of pronouns in the text; see the continuation of the quoted passage below) find myself possessed by the sole task to find a way to put an end, and exclude any *accidentia* (more precisely: those features which at least *seem* to be unessential at the moment) that disturbs the concentration on this task.

¹¹ Apart from the structural similarities (the three parts, the stations of the quests, etc.; those of which I will not treat here) the *topos* of the unthinkable unspeakable, which is one of the main issues of this essay, and naturally of the *Trilogy* itself, is a frequently recurring theme in the *Comedy*.

To provide an incomplete catalogue of such passages let me just quote a few: Inferno XXXIV. 24: "all words would fall short of what it was"; Purgatorio XXIX. 40–42: "Now Helicon must pour its fountains for me, / Urania must help me with her choir / to put in verses things hard to conceive"; Paradiso I. 70–71: "Passing beyond the human cannot be / worded"; Paradiso X. 3: "the Power – first and inexpressible – [lo primo e ineffabile Valore]". (Trans. Allen Mandelbaum.) Available on Digital Dante: <http://dante.ilt.columbia.edu/new/comedy/>

¹² Samuel Beckett. "The Unnamable". (Trans. by the author.) In *The Beckett Trilogy*. London: Picador, Pan Books, 1979 (1952). 265–382.

No, I must not try to think, simply utter. Method or no method I shall have to banish them in the end, the beings, the things, shapes, sounds and lights with which my haste to speak has encumbered this place. In the frenzy of utterance the concern with truth. Hence the interest of a possible deliverance by means of encounter. But not so fast. First dirty, then make it clean. (*The Unnamable*, 274–5)

I have already emphasised that the speaker of the text says that the discourse's continuance is conditioned by a craving, a wonder concerning the means (the method) of finishing. It seems though that isolation, reduction here is not a method but a must ("I shall have to banish them in the end", says the speaker). Descartes's method seems to be at first sight more deliberate.

In case we take the consequences of Descartes's method the most seriously and strictly it is possible, namely, to negate the existence of everything about which the least doubt may occur (i.e. about which I cannot attain absolute certainty),¹³ it turns out, firstly, that *I can solely think/say I, and cannot do otherwise* (cf.: "I, say I. Unbelieving." (*The Unnamable*, 268)). The I-saying "subject" has nothing to do with psychologically fixable categories. The compelling force of the voice saying I relativizes the category of subjectivity. The quote below from the *Tractatus* apparently uses the word "subject" as a psychological category, and thus consequently clearly distinguishes it from the philosophical self, the thinking I, the *ego cogito*.

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called *The World as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book. –

[...]

5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.

¹³ René Descartes. *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*. (Trans. F. E. Sutcliffe.) Penguin Books, 1968. 53.

The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it.¹⁴

The outline of Wittgenstein's *The World as I Found It* could be the outline of Beckett's Trilogy and *mutatis mutandis* of the Cartesian corpus. The radical isolation exhibits the subject in the end as non-existent, or at least as conditionally existent, relative. This self becomes a point without an extension – which coincides with Descartes's definition of the soul (as opposed to the body which is extension).

The propositions "*cogito ergo sum*" and "I am a *res cogitans*" (both referring to the soul) are interdependent. Their connection is not linear or hierarchical; i.e. it is not the case that the latter follows from the former. Only a thinking thing is *able* and at the same time *has to* pronounce the *cogito* of *ego cogito*. And it is able to pronounce it precisely because it thinks. Thus the circularity of this interdependent correlation opens on an infinite regression (and thus, consequently, for Beckett the thinking thing becomes even *unable* to think, an unthinking thing which nevertheless still *has to* think. Which is a kind of philosophical burlesque, of course.). The above quotation from Wittgenstein names this infinite regression "the metaphysical subject", "the philosophical self" instead of naming it *res cogitans*.

It is too often neglected in sententious propositions on and judgements of "Cartesianism" (and the cause for that is in the "Cartesian" texts themselves, to be sure) that for Descartes the *cogito* itself is *preconditioned*, so in the eminent sense (existentially) it is *not fundamental*. (I tend to think that the "modernity" of Descartes's philosophy resides mainly in this instance which brings him close back to Augustine, and which distances him from the quasi-Gnosticism and Aristotelianism of scholasticism.) Descartes names this preconditioning existence God (or he finds [His] name, for [this existence] is already named thus).

The radical question of *The Unnamable* concerns the very (*im*)possibility of naming and in the meantime the determinant condition of the speaker of being *already woven into* the process of naming and of being already named. (To use a figure of speech: the unnamable is being written from the absent source provided by the space between the string of signs JHWH. If that is space. Or void.)

To get back to Beckett's passage where I left it: "In the frenzy of utterance the concern with truth" (*The Unnamable*, 275), the voice continues. Descartes names the ultimate goal of his quest – not very surprisingly – the truth, too. It is

¹⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. (Trans. D. F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness.) London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001 (1921).

also valid here (in the relation between the Cartesian and the "Beckettian" project) as in the case of Wittgenstein that "the axis of reference of" the "examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of" the "real need" (Wittgenstein, *PI*, 108, 46e, see above). Philosophy creating literature, literature doing philosophy. And outside the security of literary and philosophical history it becomes less and less determinable which is which. (It can be added that narration here by no means serve as clear-cut boundary between philosophy and literature; the *Discourse* uses narrative strategies at least as thoroughly as Beckett's text, with the difference that Descartes leaves the question of narration unproblematicized.)

But I keep up with the continuation of the already-cited passage of *The Unnamable*: "Hence the interest of a possible deliverance by means of encounter. But not so fast. First dirty, then make it clean." This ongoing process of saying and unsaying is being conceived as a process of purification too (besides that it is a seeking for a method to make an end; to look at (un)saying as a cleansing process provides another, Dantean or quasi-Dantean aspect).

But not so fast. First take into consideration the semantics of "to deliver": it will be useful because it may provide us with a recurring logic of the text's formation. In the two expressions "to deliver a speech" and "to deliver a child" we may see the two extremes of the word's semantic scale. To utter either of them would require a special situation; the variety of these situations could be described by a scale that has the two extreme values of activity and passivity. In the cited sentence there is a dynamic shift of meaning of "deliverance". It is *essentially uncertain* whether that deliverance is to be acted out *by* the speaker "I" "in the frenzy of utterance" "by means of encounter" or *on* the "I" "by means of encounter" (thus the meaning of the word "means" is shifting, too).

The sentence gets into an essentially intermediate position (if it is a position; really it moves) as the discourse has already turned from I-narration into the impersonal in the preceding sentence. By reinterpreting this sentence in the light of the following formation of the text and the variations on this theme we may witness the semantic movement of "deliverance" (and "means") from the first ("active") to the second ("passive" or "receptive") meaning, without ever arriving there however. *The encounter may deliver one from the dirtiness of babble to the cleanness of silence through the Purgatorio (frenzy) of compulsive speech.* At least there seems to be a possibility to happen so. But the prevailing condition remains to be *the intermediary* of Purgatorio constantly accompanied by the recurring temptations (of "them", by "them"; see comments on "them" later) and the blessed moments of silence.

But yet it is the prevailing condition of Purgatorio that holds any conceivable vitality, any sign of life. In his essay "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce" the young Beckett already lays the foundation of such a view of life concerning the will-to-be *Finnegan's Wake* (*Work in Progress* then). The difference between

Dante's and Joyce's Purgatorio is the difference between the conical and the spherical, respectively. Joyce secularizes and thus revitalizes Dante's Purgatorio.

Sin is an impediment to movement up the cone, and a condition of movement round the sphere. In what sense, then, is Mr. Joyce's work purgatorial? In the absolute absence of the Absolute. Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness. Paradise the static lifelessness of unrelieved immaculation. Purgatory a flood of movement and vitality released by the conjunction of these two elements. There is a continuous purgatorial process at work, in the sense that the vicious circle of humanity is being achieved, and this achievement depends on the recurrent predomination of one of two broad qualities.¹⁵

The dynamism is Purgatorio, but the extreme values that make it work are not inherent in that dynamism; what provides the world with sense and value cannot be found in the world.

Inferno and Paradiso from time to time give signs of the possibility of their presence, but what possesses the speaker/actor is the condition of the intermediate term. In the continuous encounter with himself, in the continuous encounter with another, in the continuous encounter with [himself] as another, in-between, *on the threshold* of the encounter with the absolutely and solely exterior.¹⁶

II. (facts – *die Tatsachen*)

1. The world is all that is the case.
- 1.1. The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
- 1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by their being *all* the facts.
- 1.12 For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.

¹⁵ Samuel Beckett. "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce". In *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. London: Faber & Faber, 1972 (1929).

¹⁶ Before the above quoted sentences the speaker says: "The only encounter I ever witnessed, a long time ago now, has never yet been re-enacted. It was perhaps the end of something." (274)

- 1.13 The facts in logical space are the world.
- 1.2 The world divides into facts.
- 1.21 Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same.
- 2 What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs.

The first proposition can be substituted by this one: The world is the fact(s). Facts are not things. *Tatsachen* (facts) differ from *Sachen* (things, objects) in *Tat* (act(ion)).¹⁷ facts provide the basis for action and speech. They are the determinants of my condition as a speaker making propositions, as an actor acting. Existential determinants. I can speak only about them, on them. And, which is the same and at the same time not the same I can speak about the fact that I cannot speak about [whatever] else. Or more precisely that I cannot speak [otherwise].

And yet simply the existence of facts (and nothing else) refers to their beyond (6.44). In relation to this beyond how I speak and how I act in the world of facts (method or no method) is absolutely indifferent (6.432). And this itself is a factual proposition.

But not so fast. From facts, on facts, in facts, with facts, through facts I am only capable to set out. (And this signifies that I cannot get out of myself. Whenever I proceed I find me (5.6, 5.63, 5.632)) *Facts constitute friction which makes it possible to walk*. As long as we walk the conditions are not ideal for thinking. As long as we proceed in thinking, as long as we utter, the conditions cannot be ideal for thought. What makes it possible for thought, for speech to go on (rough ground, friction, facts) is the very condition that prevents it from being perfect, complete. For it is clear that a perfect, complete thought would be a finished and finite thought, would no longer be a thought; the word proper (the Word) will not let itself be articulated.

(Whence then the obligation to speak? What makes it necessary to disturb silence? The direction of these questions is wrong. It is not I as subject who started to move things. I find myself as subject among things already in motion. The wrong direction of these questions is the outcome of a fallacy to have metaphysical remorse (to use Søren Kierkegaard's concept); it is a fallacy to have metaphysical remorse as I am not the creator of the world. To be a subject means to be able to speak, to act, and to be unable not to speak, not to act, even if this subject happens to be, as they say, physically blind, deaf, dumb and paralytic. The pragmatic-contextual referents of the pronoun „I” and that of the word „subject” are not the same.¹⁸)

¹⁷ The Latin language also has a similar etymology with the words of *facio* and *factum*.

¹⁸ Cf. (my thoughts constitute a parallel variation on the theme of the following line of

In the light of this condition it is seen clearly that I cannot help speaking about my inability to speak. In this sense “all propositions are of equal value” (6.4); they do not and cannot provide themselves with value (sense), and it is impossible to judge ultimately what value (sense) they possess, or what value/sense possessed them. But still as long as discourse goes on propositions on facts, propositions about facts, propositions creating (or rearranging) facts remain to be the sole point of reference.

III.

(worm – between facts and life)

Unfortunately we must stick to the facts, for what else is there, to stick to, to cling to, when all founders, but the facts, when there are any, still floating, within reach of the heart, happy expression that, of the heart crying out, The facts are there, the facts are there, and then more calmly, when the danger is past, the continuation, namely, in the case before us, Here there is no wood, nor any stone, or if there is, the facts are there, it's as if there wasn't, the facts are there, no vegetables, no minerals, only Worm, kingdom unknown, Worm is there, as it were, as it were. (*The Unnamable*, 334)

Things do not matter, only facts, when it is necessary to stick to, to cling to whatever. The existence or non-existence of things (or, to be incompletely enumerative: wood, stone, vegetables, minerals), their proximity or absence does not have the slightest influence on the existence of facts (they are there, intact). “The facts are there” – cries out the heart. Is it a cry of pain or of joy?

Even after the work of the most devastating doubt there is still Worm (the *ego cogito* in incognito), [who] seems to be the irreducible remnant of “vice-existers” (289; of “them”): dumb, deaf, blind, without cognition, without motion. Kingdom unknown. But for whom unknown? Who is to know [him]? Is it possible to conceive [him] even as unknown? “But not too fast,...” (334), the passage goes on. It is clear that the work of doubt is preconditioned by the desire to know. To label [Worm] “unknown” does only have sense within the limits of the language game of an epistemological quest. There may be other language games

thoughts): “The word <<I>> does not mean the same as <<L. W.>> even if I am L. W., nor does it mean the same as the expression <<the person who is now speaking>>. But that doesn't mean: that <<L. W.>> and <<I>> mean different things. All it means is that these words are different instruments in our language.” Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations” generally known as The Blue and Brown Books*, 2. ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980 (1969). 67.

which would name [Worm] otherwise, or in which the name Worm means something else.

To utter "Worm" is itself a possible connection between different language games. Worm is the name of those souls who crawl through the gates of Purgatorio; the imperfect souls who are not yet ready to endure the *encounter* with their Lord's judgement – they have to repent for the sin of Pride:

O Christians, arrogant, exhausted, wretched,
whose intellects are sick and cannot see,
who place your confidence in backward steps,

do you not know that we are worms and born
to form the angelic butterfly that soars,
without defenses, to confront His judgement?

Why does your mind presume to flight when you
are still like the imperfect grub, the worm
before it has attained its final form? (Purgatorio X. 121-129)

What is required here seems quite impossible (for logic at least, being its basic concern with probability and possibility): a "passing beyond the human" (Paradiso I. 70) to form the "angelic butterfly" which is the final form. That is what is required to [survive] the encounter with the here solely exterior. It is a condition of levitation. But only an intellect sick with arrogance would dare to flight before the end is here (the desire *to know the end before the end*); this intellect places its confidence into backward steps and gets further and further away from the possibility to attain the final form. Further and further down the spiral – the stairs towards Paradiso and Inferno circulate round the mount of Purgatorio.

The never-ending temptation *to make an end before the end arrives* is closely related to the temptation to go silent before one is silenced, that is, before one is disengaged from one's obligation to speak, and to the infinite "stoic" temptation of suicide.¹⁹ This is the temptation of using Worm as a speaker (who

¹⁹ The speaker of *The Unnamable* speaks of suicide as the sole step, the only move which [he] alone (can) manage. It is the only step that "they" (the vice-existers) will not be able to take instead of [him]: "They can't do everything. They have put you on the right road, led you by the hand to the very brink of precipice, now it's up to you, with an unassisted last step, to show them your gratitude. [...] The last step! I who could never manage the first. But perhaps they would consider themselves sufficiently rewarded if I simply waited for the wind to blow me over. That by all means, it's in my repertory. The trouble is there is no wind equal to it. The cliff would have to cave in under me. [...]" (*The Unnamable*, 306)

essentially cannot speak), as a vice-exister (who essentially cannot exist, and cannot non-exist).

Worm, according to its use in the language game of Dante, crawls on at the gates of Purgatorio.²⁰ In case [he] dares to think that [he] is able to fly in order "to confront His judgement", then he is in a regressive spiral. *The essential situation of Worm is to stay lying on the threshold of Purgatorio, on the threshold of the encounter.*

The impossibility consists in speaking "the" Language, the mistake is to believe that one speaks a (comprehensive) language in which it is possible to utter the proper name – suggest both of these uses of Worm in the discourses of Dante and of Beckett. The sole absolute alternative would be to abstain from naming, to go silent.

And it is impossible to go silent, and yet it is impossible not to go silent, but in-between two impossibilities there seem to move *a shift of volition called life* – intangible by the possibilities of factual logic; "the facts are there", "Worm

There is no contingency equal to suicide: it requires an absolute resolution. It may be irresistibly attractive as the sole possible motion as opposed to the prevailing condition of inertia. It would be action par excellence – the one which begets an end at last. Still it is suspected of being an expression of gratitude towards "them", towards the tempting possible actors and speakers. That too is to be resisted. And, in any way it remains caught up in the realm of inertia in the end; the cliff won't cave in.

²⁰ Molloy, the first speaker of the first part of the *Trilogy*, at the concluding phase of his hopeless journey in the forest (which was in prospect to find his mother and home) first abandon "erect motion, that of man" (*Molloy*, 82), then crawls on his belly ("I suddenly cried, striking my brow, Christ, there's crawling, I never thought of that" (82)), "like a reptile" (83), and finally crawls on his back, plunging his "crutches blindly behind" him (83; blind – think of the inter-relations between sight and cognition) into the thickets. His path of motion describes "if not a circle, at least a great polygon, perfection is not of this world" (83; the spiral). Finally he finds himself in the light that which he could have foreseen but only from far. It is outside the forest (the forest where Dante had lost the true path, and from which Descartes wanted to get out by following a straight line in the *Discourse*), in a ditch ("I don't know why" (83) comments Molloy). The question concerning the destination of his mother and his home now seems to him as "ludicrously idle" (83) (the whole "quest" was set out to find her!), "though of undeniable interest on the plane of pure knowledge" (83–4). But his "interest" seems to consist in staying in this situation (the last sentence uttered by Molloy is: "Molloy could stay, where he happened to be." (84)), in-between the double-prospect of height (light) and depth (ditch).

Cf. the abstract of this story with the following description: "Even when you aren't thinking in circles, you may still sometimes stride straight through the thicket of questions out into the open, and at other times wander along tortuous or zigzagging paths which don't lead out into the open at all." Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Vermischte Bemerkungen* = *Culture and Value*. (Ed. G. H. von Wright. Trans. Peter Winch.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980 (1977). 80e.

is there” as there is “a there” made possible by the animating voice of life, by the interval. The shift is infinitely quieting and hardly perceptible – the descending pitch and the dispersing noise of the sentence concludes into a soft rhyming murmur (in order to reconcile the acoustical and the spiritual): “Worm is there, as it were, as it were.”

IV. (life)

6.52 We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.²¹
(Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have been unable to say what constituted that sense?)

Life resists problematization. After all the riddles (6.4312, 6.5) are solved by science the [problem] of life remains unquestioned, intact. Life can never be a theme of research; no solutions and no problems can be discovered.

Nevertheless, [it] seems to be the hidden, absconded reference point of value and sense (which, in the end, makes it possible for any problem to emerge).²² For the world does not provide itself with sense (6.41).

The proposition “The world and life are one” (5.621) does not mean that they are equated, but that the world and life are two aspects and not two separate [entities]. The world is essentially picture-like. The world of facts is what is

²¹ There is a much later (1937) variation on this thought: “The way to solve the problem you see in life is to live in a way that will make what is problematic disappear.

The fact that life is problematic shows that the shape of your life does not fit into life’s mould. So you must change the way you live and, once your life does fit into the mould, what is problematic will disappear.” It is clear that these formulations says more than the TLP version. They are imperative, while the former is descriptive. *Culture and Value*, 27e.

²² There is a remark of Wittgenstein dated around 1931 which partly supports this idea: “Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning.” *Culture and Value*, 16e.

there to be problematized. "The facts all contribute only to setting the problem, not to its solution." (6.4321) The [problem] of life seems to be heterogeneous to the problems of the world. Any problematized fact contributes to set the [problem]. But the solutions to these problems do not give us any picture of the [problem];²³ the constitution of life is what essentially cannot be discovered, revealed.

Though we use the concept of life in a number of ways in philosophical (and literary) discourse, it can never bring us any closer to life. But it may help us to measure the distance. One such concept is Augustine's concept of God as life par excellence (cf. for instance *Confessions* VII. 10. 5-9²⁴ and several passages of the *Soliloquies*), and another such concept occurs in later remarks of Wittgenstein.

568. Seeing life as a weave, this pattern (pretence, say) is not always complete and is varied in a multiplicity of ways. But we, in our conceptual world, keep on seeing the same, recurring with variations. That is how our concepts take it. For concepts are not for use on a single occasion.

569. And one pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others.²⁵

The pattern/pretence of weave pretends life in the discourse. The very pattern of weave is but one pattern in the weave. (Woven textuality is itself a pattern.) Concepts relativize each other in the weave and relativize the weave. They are essentially interdependent, interwoven in the ongoing weaving of philosophical speech. That is, in the *life of speech* that they pretend. In the *speech of life* they pretend to speak but that they obviously cannot bring closer.

There is a radically agnostic tendency in Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy that brings it very close to Augustine. In fact, the most often quoted and perhaps most well known sentence of Wittgenstein which closes the *Tractatus* (7) is a compressed paraphrase of an Augustinian thought from the book

²³ Cf. this with the closing words of the Preface: "I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved." (*TLP*, p. 4.)

²⁴ "Aut ulla vena trahitur aliunde, qua esse et vivere currat in nos, praeterquam tu facis nos, domine, cui esse et vivere non aliud atque aliud est, quia summa esse atque summa vivere id ipsum est?"

²⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Zettel*. 2nd ed. (Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981 (1967). Pp. 98-9.

On the Christian Doctrine. The afterlife of these thoughts of a rather similar nature vividly shows how the rhetoric quality of *dispositio (taxis)* fundamentally influences the weight of a thought: the closing position of the Wittgensteinian thought provides it with a seemingly much deeper emphasis than that of the Augustinian one. Nevertheless they both show the consequential agnostic attitude towards the capacities of knowledge and speech. It is useful to quote the whole section of Augustine because it contextualizes the thought of going silent right in the problematic of inexpressibility (I italicize the paraphrased sentence, to be sure).

6. Have I spoken of God, or uttered his Praise, in any worthy way? Nay, I feel that I have done nothing more than desire to speak; and if I have said anything, it is not what I desired to say. How do I know this, except from the fact, that God is unspeakable [*deus ineffabilis est*]? But what I have said, if it had been unspeakable, could not have been spoken. And so God is not even to be called “unspeakable”, because to say even this is to speak of Him. Thus there arises a curious contradiction of words, because if the unspeakable is what cannot be spoken of, it is not unspeakable if it can be called unspeakable. *And this opposition of words is rather to be avoided by silence than to be explained away by speech. [Quae pugna verborum silentio canenda potius quam voce pacanda est.]* And yet God, although nothing worthy of His greatness can be said of Him, has condescended to accept the worship of men’s mouths, and has desired us through the medium of our own words to rejoice in His praise. For on this principle it is that He is called Deus (God). For the sound of those two syllables in itself conveys no true knowledge of His nature; but yet all who know the Latin tongue are led, when that sound reaches their ears, to think of a nature supreme in excellence and eternal in existence.²⁶

There is a split in the reference of the word “ineffable” which Augustine tries to expose. For strictly speaking this word tries (or pretends) to point at something which is beyond its own medium. There is no logical model which can give account for this split reference. [It] silences logic and speech.

It is not by chance that the closing sentence of the *Tractatus* is a tautology. “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” What we cannot speak about we *can do nothing else but* to pass [it] over in silence. But there is an imperative which completes the tautology that is the *Ungrund* of logic. Yet

²⁶ Augustine. *On the Christian Doctrine*. (Trans. James J. O’Donnell.) Available at: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/augustine.html>

the sentence itself does not contain the *Ungrund* itself in any way but can only describe its relation or non-relation to it.

In Augustine's passage the idea of God is clearly divided from the existing God. The effect of the two syllables "deus" is that you imagine the idea of a perfect being but in this case the idea and its [object] may have nothing in common.

When we say that life is utterly inexpressible we run into the same contradiction in terms. We should pass over this contradiction in silent acknowledgement (and not in ignorance). In a way, the contradiction and the tautology as means of (non-)expression mark the limits of our possible knowledge. More precisely they describe how the limits look like from the inside. To demand more from speech and knowledge would be illusory excess. And the possibilities of speech and knowledge remain always excessively overflowing: this contradiction of life's inexpressibility lying at the depth of the expressible is what grants it the infinite possibility of joy and praise of life. And of suffering and pain of life.

V.

(to tell life: story/life; from time to time)

For the speaker of *The Unnamable* the inclination to storytelling is the strongest temptation preventing [him] from going silent, preventing [him] from living. To tell a story is always pretence, a mock imitation of life. The pronoun "they" is meant to designate the various possible speakers (vice-existers) of the [speaker]; to allow any of them to speak would conclude in another storytelling which begins, goes on for some time and then ends. They are "tempters" (*The Unnamable*, 296). They are the variations of the temptation of making an end. From time to time there are enumerations of "them": the names of the speakers (narrators) and actors ("heroes") of previous Beckett works are usually mentioned together with names invented in situ or with some remark, which suggests that there could be a countless add-on to these.

In *The Unnamable* emerges the name of Mahood (first he is named Basil) who seems to be the storyteller of storytellers: a generalized variation of the previous ones (the suffix "-hood" points in this direction) and the most individualistic ("Ma-": the reversed "am" of "I am") among them at once. "He" may be described as the inner personification of the faculty of imagination, or of invention. He is isolated: he is a hairless head locked up in a jar in a chop-house near the shambles. He "heaped stories on" the [speaker's] head (283). The speaker "always liked not knowing"; Mahood "didn't know either, but it worried him." Their voices mingled with each other. The speaker is uncertain whether Mahood's voice is present at the

time when he (the speaker) speaks. He hopes that "it will disappear one day", "completely". From time to time the speaker has to realize that the voice speaking is not [his] own voice, however hard [he] tries to hear and speak in [his] own voice, that is to go silent at last. [It] would be a life at last.²⁷

The vice-exister Malone in the previous part of the *Trilogy* tried hard to report his own death. Malone is a mutilated variant of "I'm alone". That is, [he] is the isolated [subject] without I. The [ego] in its nakedness and closeness. Near the end of [his] soliloquy [he] says: "I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth to into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already, of the great cunt of existence. [...] My story ended I'll be living yet. Promising lag. I shall say I no more." (*Malone Dies*, 260) Through a (re)birth [he] has been purged from the dirt "of the great cunt of existence" (in case you read the sentence without paying attention to the seemingly redundant colon). Or, to venture the expression of the impression, the feet are clear enough for "the great cunt of existence".²⁸ The meaning is shifting without arriving at any fixable point. A double-negation: neither existence nor inexistence (in existence). "My story ended I'll be living yet." Malone survives [his] story. Malone survives [his] soliloquy. Or the end of the story of Malone makes it possible to live. "That is the end of me. I shall say I no more." That is the end of Malone saying I. Or that is the end of I saying Malone, of I saying Malone as I. Instead of this the [unnamable] says I. ("I, say I. Unbelieving." (*The Unnamable*, 267)) The voice in [me] says I. Would that mean that there are no stories left at last?

The anonymous speaker sets out with the following questions in the IV. text for nothing: "Where would I go, if I could go, who would I be, if I could be, what would I say, if I had a voice, who says this, saying it's me?" (*Texts for Nothing*, 22) The I who is "the same old stranger as ever" (ibidem) is expected to speak. It is possible that [it] is even the I who says the following:

There's my life, why not, it is one, if you like, if you must, I don't say no this evening. There has to be one, it seems, once there is speech, no need of a story, a story is not compulsory, just a life, that's

²⁷ "I am doing my best, and failing again, yet again. I don't mind failing, it's a pleasure, but I want to go silent. Not just as now, the better to listen, but peacefully, victorious, without ulterior object. Then it would be a life worth having, a life at last." (*The Unnamable*, 284) Cf. "peacefully, victorious" with the pseudonym of the author of *Either/Or*: Victor Eremita (i.e. the victorious hermit, victorious in hermitage).

²⁸ Grammatically there is a third possible interpretation but I do not see yet the point in understanding the passage as "the feet of <<the great cunt of existence>> are <<clear already>>". However, that is a legitimate alternative. And maybe it is not accidental that the word "cunt" provides a rather blasphemous association: it has the same string of sounds as that of the name "Kant". Open for suggestions.

the mistake I made, one of the mistakes, to have wanted a story for myself, whereas life alone is enough. (*Texts for Nothing*, 24)

Life alone is enough. The most compressed combination of (not solely artistic) minimalism and maximalism. 1. It is enough to ("merely") live, to stay alive, as it were, there is no need of anything (least of all a story): it would be a luxury to have anything else. 2. Life *alone* is enough and nothing else will do instead of [it], anything else (most of all a story) is vain and useless. (3) To *live alone* is enough; to live with someone else, to live somewhere else, to live later or before will not do, it would be futile.

These alternatives do not disclose each other at all. On the contrary, they deepen the consequences of one another. These alternatives do not occur one after the other, but at the same time which is not time: *from time to time*. The text ends as follows:

Yes, there are moments, like this moment, when I seem almost restored to the feasible. Then it goes, all goes, and I'm far again, with a far story again, I wait for me afar for my story to begin, to end, and again this voice cannot be mine. That's where I'd go, if I could go, that's who I'd be, if I could be. (*Texts for Nothing*, 24–5)

The speaker of the last two rhythmically rhyming or repetitive²⁹ sentences has a voice that cannot be [his] voice. The fragment "this voice cannot be mine" is enhanced as it does not contain any rhyming or repetitive feature which would connect it to the other parts. It is enhanced by virtue of an absence, bereavement. It could be considered an aside – a shifting of the mould of the speaking subject which requires a shift in the receiving subject. Semantically-logically speaking this fragment is a negation. To negate the negation in logic means to affirm ($\sim\sim p = p$).

But these are, so to speak, heterogeneous negations (the absence of the rhyming quality of the expression and the logical negation); negations on different planes (the acoustic and the intellectual). Between the planes there lives "this moment" which is already gone and have not come yet. *From time to time* [it] "seem almost" present – in the condition of bereftness and absence. [It], i.e. this concentrated temporal mock-category of eternity and timelessness, of a never-

²⁹ I italicize the rhyming syllables, the repetitions: "Then it *goes*, all *goes*, and I'm *far again*, with a *far* story *again*, I wait for me *afar* for my story to begin, to *end*, and *again* this voice cannot be mine." The interrelations: goes – goes; far – a far – (for) – afar – (for); again – again – (be)gin – (a)gain; end – and.

happened past and never-to-come future is what creates a mock-presence, a quasi-eternity that makes it possible to go on.³⁰

VI.

(eternity; to know life: knowledge/life)

6.4311 [...] If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.

Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits.

6.4312 Not only there is no guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say of its eternal survival after death; but, in any case, this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. [...] The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time.

6.45 To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole – a limited whole.

Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical.

(It is easy to see in these passages the immense influence of the thought of Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer – but these formulations are *radically agnostic* as opposed to theirs. For instance 6.4312 denies the imperative power of intellectual postulates.) Outside space and time you live when you receive the worldview sub specie aeterni. From [here] the limited totality of the factual world becomes clear. [It] is life in an eminent sense – a potentially infinite life as opposed to the limitedness of the world. Conceiving life in this sense cannot guarantee any comforting end in advance. Contemplated from this point of view

³⁰ Cf. my considerations with some of the “few general remarks” (267) at the outset of *The Unnamable*: “Perhaps that is how it began. You think you are simply resting, the better to act when the times comes, or for no reason, and you soon find yourself powerless ever to do anything again. No matter how it happened. It, say it, not knowing what. [...] What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later? Generally speaking. There must be other shifts. [...]” (ibidem)

the world has an end but not life. We cannot foresee our end – that is a matter of absolute uncertainty. *Life cannot foresee its end as/thus it has none.* [It] sees the end of the world of space and time (the world of Kant's transcendental aesthetics). [It] is essentially eschatological and archaeological at the same time which is not time; from time to time.

Life is not a picture and cannot be put into words (6.522). Briefly: [it] is not spatiotemporal and thus essentially non-empirical. [It] resists articulation. [It] is mystical. To articulate any proposition on [it] falls short of giving a picture of [it]. [It] cannot be, so to speak, factualized. The plane of knowing (natural sciences), the epistemological quest is entirely irrelevant to this [problem]. From [here] the ultimate indifference of the world of facts becomes clear. And it seems that [it] requires or commands silence (7).

“Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death.” (6.4311) “So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end.” (6.431) Death designates the end of the world and not that of life. Death and *sub specie aeterni* is what is essentially non-empirical. Death is, so to speak, an infinite end. The inconceivable concept of death always remains outside or beyond any systematic vision, even if the system is built on a speculative imaginative concept of death (or of God, or of life, etc.).

It is clear that there are no valid claims against nihilism, atheism and scepticism because themselves have no valid claims in those [fields] where they imagine themselves to trespass. This is not a [field] for any valuable (sensible) claims. Scepticism tries to propose negations on the inexpressible.

- 6.51 Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked.
For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said.

In case you try to solve everything by means of the epistemological quest, scepticism must seem to be irrefutable, for its formal logic can be just as perfect as that of Thomas Aquinas and the five or six ways to demonstrate the existence of God. A solid, fixed ground is presupposed (even if not articulated) in both of them. And this solid fixed ground is system-inherent: it can be contained in a vision.

But on perfect ground motion and thought is essentially impossible – there is no friction. The all-containing, captivating vision lacks the source of outer resistance, of friction – or rather it imagines to have contained this resistance into itself. They – scepticism and the God-demonstrations – both speak directly

about what is unspeakable; and they remain completely intact by one another and become somewhat prison-like in themselves.

Descartes compares "the moral writings of the ancient pagans to the most proud and magnificent palaces built on nothing but sand and mud." (31) He "considered that nothing solid could have been built on such shifting foundations." (32) Shifting foundations mean here the foundations of any philosophy before Christianity. Descartes reports that he himself "had always had an extreme desire to learn to distinguish true from false in order to see clearly into" his "own actions and to walk with safety in this life." (33) He strives to root out all the prejudices and errors from his mind during his travels. "Not that, in so doing, I imitated the sceptics who doubt only for doubting's sake, and affect to be always undecided; for, on the contrary, my whole plan had for its aim assurance and rejection of shifting ground and sand in order to find rock or clay." (50)

A solid ground is what is needed to walk with safety in this life. Thus Descartes's project is to *demonstrate* the existence of God to acquire such a ground – God, whose existence is the precondition of any demonstration, of any utterance, according to his (Descartes's) own account. However successful he considers himself in this project, the closing remark of the Sixth Meditation can be telling about whether that solid ground is always at hand *in concreto*. "But because the necessities of action often oblige us to make a decision before we have had the leisure to examine things so carefully, it must be admitted that the life of man is very often subject to error in particular cases; and we must, in conclusion, recognize *the infirmity and weakness of our nature*." (169, italics mine.)

All the same: it should not be forgotten that even if the concept of God for Descartes becomes the part of the all-containing vision, the concept itself is strictly indefinite. It follows from this that the theological-dogmatic-metaphysical debates about the imagined features of the inconceivable and inexpressible and the origins of the world (the "cosmological ideas") are being already seen as completely futile long before Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. It seems that the attempted demonstration of the existence *par excellence* decidedly does not intend or imagine itself capable of telling anything concerning the nature of this existence. The XXVI. Section in the 1st book of the *Principia* about the infinite and the indefinite will not allow a more definite or confident way of "demonstration". This section is about "[t]hat it is not needful to essay to comprehend the infinite, but merely to hold all that in which we can find no limits as indefinite, such as the extension of the world, the divisibility of the parts of matter, the number of the stars, etc."

We will thus never embarrass ourselves by disputes about the infinite, seeing it would be absurd for us who are finite to undertake to determine anything regarding it, and thus as it were limit it by

endeavouring to comprehend it. We will accordingly give ourselves no concern to reply to those who demand whether the half of an infinite line is also infinite, and whether an infinite number is even or odd, and the like, because it is only such as imagine their minds to be infinite who seem bound to entertain questions of this sort.³¹

The weakness and infirmity of our nature will show the enterprises to define the essentially infinite not only as excessive but also as futile or even damaging. To preserve this in mind during our thinking and speculations is not a question of “Cartesianism” or “anti-Cartesianism”. And often it is too easily forgotten that the “apostle” of Reason accentuates the necessary limitations of this otherwise important faculty and does not at all treat it as an indubitable authority.³²

At any rate, the consciousness of the infirmity and weakness of the human nature (rather than the successful demonstration of the existence preconditioning demonstrations) is the aspect which a quasi-Cartesian or quasi-anti-Cartesian thinker, Blaise Pascal preserves and emphasises. His interpretation of Descartes is very close to that of Beckett. Pascal *preserves* the constant threat of nihilism or scepticism (he calls it Pyrrhonism) on logical discourse. For him it is not dependent on the mind’s judgement whether thought proceeds on solid ground or sand.

But it is impossible that God should ever be the end, if He is not the beginning. We lift our eyes high, but lean upon the sand; and the earth will dissolve, and we shall fall whilst looking at the heavens. (488)³³

In writing down my thought, it sometimes escapes me; but this makes me remember my weakness, that I constantly forget. This is as instructive to me as my forgotten thought; for I strive only to know my nothingness. (372)

³¹ René Descartes. *The Principles of Philosophy*, excerpts. (Trans. John Veitch). Available at: <http://www.classicallibrary.org/descartes/principles/>

³² There are tendencies to view Beckett’s texts either as Cartesian or more often as anti-Cartesian projects. I see both of these trends as very narrowly reductive. It is not useful to ignore the constantly interweaving motion of pros and cons, of quasi-pros and quasi-cons which is a structuring force of most of his texts. And it is even less useful to ignore that these texts carefully avoid to demonstrate or to refute anything whatsoever.

³³ Blaise Pascal. *Pensées*. (Trans. W. F. Trotter.) Available on: <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees>

To lean on sand is a determinant condition and not a matter of choice. *Our sole existential certainty, death, is essential uncertainty.* (cf. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II. 13) The epistemological quest is not primordial. The weakness and infirmity of forgetfulness, of not-knowing is *qualitatively* instructive.

It is a philosophy which at the outset discards demonstrated and proved existence. (Its aim is rather to become contemporary with existence, with life, while and by constantly reminding itself about the absurdity of this project: it is impossible to become contemporary with what pre-structurates time and space.) To encounter with the indifference of the factual world and the I-saying subject to what is "higher" by leaning exactly on them.

Thomas Bernhard's formulation in *Gehen* "*gegen die Tatsachen zu existieren*"³⁴ is a compressed expression of this condition. It can cover the following meanings: 1) to exist against facts; 2) to exist in direction to facts; 3) to exist in relation to facts. But there still remains an illuminating feature of the word "*gegen*": its rhyming with the title *Gehen*. To exist from facts, to exist towards facts, to exist against facts and to go on indeed seems to be the most complicated art – it is not art anymore but life.

VII.

(to experience life: pain and joy; the blessedness of absence)

Strictly speaking, in our determinate purgatorial position, or rather stream of life we could not have the slightest idea about experiencing Inferno and Paradiso. We have their concepts nevertheless. And we must have their hints.

The two extreme values of experience, pain and joy are concepts without objective measurable evidence. The expressions of pain and joy can always be pretended or imitated, and it is impossible to have unambiguous criteria determining their genuineness. At any rate we always try to make a decision concerning their genuineness.

The main difficulty arises from our imagining the experience (the pain, for instance) as a thing, for which of course we have a name and whose concept is therefore quite easy to grasp.

³⁴ Thomas Bernhard. *Gehen*. Suhrkamp Frankfurt Verlag, 1977 (1971). p. 12

So we always want to say: We know what "pain" means (namely *this*), and so the difficulty only consists in simply not being able to determine this in someone else in certainty. What we don't see is that the *concept* 'pain' is only beginning to be investigated. The same is true of pretence.³⁵

So our making a decision does not rest on a fixed concept of pain. It is the indeterminacy inscribed in the possibility of making decisions in such cases that marks the beginning of the concept's investigation. The indeterminacy is conditionally essential here; it will never be abolished. Even if we try to imagine that it would be possible to define in each case the genuineness of pain by a detector, the criteria of pretence and pain would change but the indeterminacy would stay.

Could a legislator abolish the concept of pain?

The basic concepts are interwoven so closely with what is most fundamental in our way of living that they are therefore unassailable. (*Last Writings*, 43e–44e)

The most fundamental and indefinite concepts are unassailable not at all because of their objective certainty (these concepts condition the possibility of objective certainty) but as their *conceivable indeterminacy* is indispensable for our way of living to be maintained; it makes it possible to go on.

Fear, pain and joy are "primitive" and unspeakable relations. Their concepts are necessarily indefinite and indeterminate. The behaviour or the expression of pain, of fear and of joy (facial features, groaning, screaming, smiling, crying, etc.) are signs and parts of their concepts, but even a (still unimaginable) total list of these parts could not determine schematically our concept. One is tempted to say that the remaining unspeakable private experience (of pain, for instance) is what is essential to it. What is essential remains silent.

536. I may know that he is in pain, but I never know the exact degree of his pain. So here is something that he knows and that his expression of pain does not tell me. Something purely private. He knows exactly how severe his pain is? (Isn't that much as if one were to say he always knows exactly where he is? Namely *here*.) Is the concept of the degree given with the pain? (*Zettel*)

³⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. Vol. 2. (Trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue.) Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 43e.

What can be named essential here is not a question of measurable knowledge. That is, what remains private and untold is not knowable even for the person experiencing the pain. (In case it would be knowable it would be tellable too.) But what he can tell and express to us is all linked with his pain (or joy, or fear, etc.). Our response to these signs will not basically rest on a thought out decision we make concerning the genuineness of the signs. In a way, our reaction will reflect (again in a private way, of course) the “primitiveness” and inexpressibility of its source.

541. But what is the word “primitive” meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought.
[...]
543. My relation to the appearances here is part of my concept. (*Zettel*)

This essentially indefinite indeterminate concept is not the outcome of a well-built speculation (in fact it is the lay of the possibility of any architectonic speculation), but what foremostly determines my way of acting and speaking. These concepts are constantly in motion and what is presumably constant in them cannot be fixed by thought, cannot be put into words.

* *

The delight I take in my thoughts is delight in my own strange life.
Is this joy of living? (*Culture and Value*, 22e)

But we don't have the feeling that someone who sees no problem in life is blind to something important, even to the most important thing of all? Don't I feel like saying that a man like that is just living aimlessly – blindly, like a mole, and that if only he could see, he would see the problem?

Or shouldn't I say rather: a man who lives rightly won't experience the problem as sorrow, so for him it will not be a problem, but a joy rather; in other words for him it will be a bright halo round his life, not a dubious background. (*CV*, 27e)

The [problem] of life is not an unseen background which should be discovered in order to comprehend [it]. You can only, so to speak, unthink the unthinkable and unspeak the unspeakable. That is, the epistemological quest has no access to [it]; the ineffability is the strictest possible. [It] is the ground on

which thought-unthought and say-unsay could move. But not necessarily a background. [It] is constantly present in its absence.

May this un/thought be the joy of living (*Lebensfreude*)? This question is curiously senseless as it is not possible to answer it – either affirmation or negation would fall short of approximating the [problem].

To explain the unutterable joy – what does that mean? Does it mean to explain that it is this and that? In that case, the predicate “unutterable” becomes just a rhetorical predicate, a strong expression, and the like. The explaining jack-of-all-trades has everything in readiness before the beginning of the performance, and now it begins. He dupes the listener; he calls the joy unutterable, and then a new surprise, a truly surprising surprise – he utters it. Suppose that the unutterable joy is based upon the contradiction that an existing human being is composed of the infinite and the finite, is situated in time, so that the joy of the eternal in him becomes unutterable because he is existing; it becomes a supreme drawing of breath that cannot take shape, because the existing person is existing. In that case, the explanation would be that it is unutterable; it cannot be anything else – no nonsense. If, however, a profound person first condemns someone or other who denies that there is an unutterable joy and then says: No, I assume that there is an unutterable joy, but I go further and utter it, then he is only making a fool of himself, and the only difference between him and the other whom he condemns is that the other is more honest and direct and says what the profound person is also saying, since they both are saying essentially the same thing.³⁶

To preserve the unutterable unutterable is to prevent [it] to be uttered either affirmatively or negatively, to leave it out from the game of demonstration and refutation. Demonstration and refutation says *essentially* the same thing. Not that [it] can become object of any of these. But it is the most *tempting* for logic to go further and to imagine surpassing into the [prelogic], to imagine enveloping the [prelogic] into itself.

Despite the clear limitations of logic one has to remind oneself again and again that the affirmation and the negation, the demonstration and the refutation of a fact concerns the same fact. Negation can not add anything to the fact.

³⁶ Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard), *Concluding Postscript*, 221.

4.621 But it is important that the signs 'p' and '~p' can say the same thing. For it shows that nothing in reality corresponds to the sign '~'.

The occurrence of negation in a proposition is not enough to characterize its sense ($\sim p = p$).

The propositions 'p' and '~p' have opposite sense, but there corresponds to them one and the same reality.

Affirmation and negation, and consequently demonstration and refutation can not say anything in a philosophical sense; i.e. they are analytic judgements in the Kantian sense which are not able to extend our knowledge but at best to clarify and arrange the propositions already at hand.

Malone loses his stick with which hitherto he has been able to draw the things near to himself (that is analogous to the process of losing the linguistic tools with which to utter constative statements). He tends to conceive it as a catastrophe. But while meditating on the nature of this loss, he comprehends what the stick meant to him, and understands the essential "Stick, shorn of all its accidents" (*Malone Dies*, 233). So he discerns in the catastrophe a "blessing in disguise". "To know you can do better the next time, unrecognizably better, and that there is no next time, and it is a blessing there is not, there is a thought to be going on with." (ibidem.) The (un)thought of the possibility of an unrecognizable capability is a blessing to go on. It is a blessing that there is no next time. Or it is a blessing there is not – a blessing present in virtue of its absence. The "blessedness of absence" (204). A silent blessedness granting a thought to be going on with.

A "thought to be going on with." To know. But what is essential about silence is that "in the silence you don't know" (*The Unnamable*, 382). To know is incommensurable with the condition of silence. Silence is not knowable.

My voice. The voice. I hardly know it any more. I'm going silent. Hearing this voice no more, that's what I call going silent. That is to say I'll hear it still, if I listen hard. I'll listen hard. Listening hard, that's what I call going silent. I'll hear it still, broken, faint, unintelligible, if I listen hard. Hearing it still, without hearing what it says, that's what I call going silent. (*The Unnamable*, 362)

The definitions weaken each other and thus strengthen the resolution to go silent. From the growing void of the attempted circumscribing of "going silent" yields the resolution to hear. An infinitely interested direction towards the voice, the other, you.

The most intensive inwardness turns out to be preconditioned by an unrecognizable exteriority. [It] is a small rotunda named Yonder, or which is somewhere yonder, beyond something (291; the rotunda reappears in *Imagination Dead Imagine*) from where and to where I proceed, where I am from time to time. *You, Yonder, beyond would be the blessed place called home.* The memory of that home, which is not a memory, the hope of that home, which is not a hope (i.e. these are not cognitive categories) is what makes to go on, to think and to speak possible.

...but how can you think and speak at the same time, without a special gift, your thoughts wander, your words too, far apart, no, that's an exaggeration, apart, between them would be the place to be, where you suffer, rejoice, at being bereft of speech, bereft of thought, and feel nothing, hear nothing, know nothing, say nothing, are nothing, that would be a blessed place to be, where you are. (344)

The absolute exterior you would be the blessed place. My infinite process towards you is blessed; its indeterminacy is what is the form of the blessedness. I can never get assurance whether I proceed closer or further. [It] is outside the game of certainty and uncertainty; [it] makes that game playable.

This indicates an ontology which is not ontology: *to ov* is to be blessed to go on. The closing word of *The Unnamable* is "on". This word ends with a nasal close-plosive consonant "n" (as well as the Greek word for "being" or "is" (*Sein*): *ov*, and as well as the Sanskrit sacred "meaningless" word OM). Thus the phonic ending suggests closeness, a self-devouring discourse. And the you becomes I again ("you must go on, I can't go on"). But the meaning of the closing remarks: "it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" work against the closeness; these remarks suggest an inconclusiveness, a process unfinished, openness. The semantic plays itself against the phonic, and vice versa. It is given for us to go on, and not to know, and it is a blessing that it is so.

[To understand] life, to live means not merely to resign myself to the fact that I can never understand life but to take this fact as a blessing, a gift. The sentences of Wittgenstein strive *against* the fact that it is impossible to understand the other, you. Against the facts, "*gegen die Tatsachen zu existieren*" is indeed the most difficult and tiresome art as it is clearly beyond art. "The difficulty in philosophy is to say no more than we know." (Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, 45) Philosophizing becomes the [art] of resisting the temptation of my numerous possible speakers and actors; it is an infinite means to catch up with life which is possessed by all of us and which possesses all of us.

[Here] art falls short and remains silent, is silenced – and art cannot give form to the silence itself but can only clarify its relation to the silence. Silence yields potentially infinite poetic and philosophical exuberance. [It] limits and thus creates and structures art's scope and playground again and again. And thus [it] requires to pronounce from time to time: here now I stop.

Or there is no other choice. Silencing my voice I stopped at any rate, but there is nothing that can assure me that it was the right moment. And stopping itself does not solve anything at all, in order to leave it open for me to go on.

THE CONTINUITY OF INTERPRETATION THE SEMIOTIC AND POETIC FUNCTIONS OF THE MISE EN ABYME IN PAUL AUSTER'S *THE MUSIC OF CHANCE*

The iconic notion of the *mise en abyme* has been that of incessant semiotic inquiry since its first introduction in literary discourse by André Gide's *Journal for 1893*.

„(...) what would explain better what I'd wanted to do (...) would be a comparison with the device from heraldry that involves putting a second representation of the original shield „en abyme” within it.”¹

This heraldic concept, originally put into print in Claude-Edmonde Magny's *Histoire du roman français depuis 1918*, was chosen as an emblem and instrument of interpretation owing to the fact that its characteristics represent, mirror a certain visual or textual structure both intensively and extensively. Its evolution into the Peircean counterpart of the Saussurean unicorn may explain its popularity and controversial nature. This paper aims at highlighting certain contexts in the semiosis of *mise en abyme* in Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance* (1990) and by the same token attempts at exploring the narrative function of ‘the shield within the shield’. Before examining the significance of the City of World (a miniature scale-model of a particular estate in Pennsylvania), it is necessary to revise some aspects in the general understanding of this paradoxical iconic device.

The unique position *mise en abyme* occupies in present day critical literary thinking is rooted not simply in post-modern preoccupation with self-reflexivity and mirror images but also in the semiotic problems this structure poses to scholars of the field. The deductive logical paradox inherent in its semiotic workings makes the *mise en abyme* an ostentatious example for the text's capacity to signify a point outside of its own universe. While critical thinking seems to have no aesthetic objections to repetition in the postmodern idea of ‘the copy of a copy of a copy...’², the situation in the case of ‘the copy on a copy on a copy’ may be somewhat different. It is absolutely evident that the Saus-

¹ Gide, A. 1967. *Journals 1889–1949*. Hammondsworth: Penguin. p 30.

² The set of illustrative examples could range from Erik Satie's serial music through Andy Warhol to contemporary pop culture.

surean insistence on the arbitrariness of signification can hardly accept the stress laid on mimetic functions of a form representing itself within the boundaries of the antecedent structure. Accused of displaying limited isomorphism and blamed for the futility of infinite regress and duplication, the concept of 'the shield within the shield' raises questions concerning the divisions and subdivisions in the Peircean apparatus of iconicity, which, in turn, chases us back to the problem of signs being motivated or inherently symbolic in nature. Peirce considers the metaphoric nature and symbolic iconicity of any given language system primordial and essential. In this respect (barring pure symbols) language is described as one entirely built on *symbolic* icons and *symbolic* indices, a typology that underlines the conventionality of the relationship between sign and object. On the grounds of this very system, one might even come to the conclusion that the *mise en abyme* is an indexical (having an existential connection with its object) icon (resembling, partaking in the characters of the denotatum). Are we to call it then a *symbolic indexical icon* (all three in one) so as to maintain the Saussurean premise and the Peircean description?

This daunting question was explored by Olga Fischer and Max Nänny, who set up a dichotomy that differentiated between two distinct modes of signification, namely *endophoric* and *exophoric* iconicity.³ Exophoric iconicity stands for the traditional concept of 'form miming meaning' whereas its counterpart, 'the endophoric' is based on the idea of 'form miming form'.⁴ Since the latter type describes sequence of elements operating in parallel on the same level, the symbolic principle of iconicity is reaffirmed here. A further consequence to this argumentation determines the autonomy of self-reference as the essence of literature, i.e. reference over depiction, existence over mimesis and meaning. The advantage of such classification emerges in the way this system renders the arbitrary equation of signifier versus signified and the iconicity of signification into two distinct categories, and so erases the conflict of exclusiveness.

Once this intra-lingual, endophoric mode of signification has been established, we may turn towards the rather vertiginous paradox of 'regression *ad infinitum*', which is present in the *mise en abyme*. Being the most opaque and at once the most transparent moment in the plot, this synecdoche, this structural point appears to be a narrative equivalent of J. Hillis Miller's linguistic moment.

³ Form Miming Meaning. Iconicity in Language and Literature (Benjamins 1990)

⁴ The emphasis laid on the intra-lingual aspect of signification results in the extended interpretation of the stock example '*veni, vidi, vici*' assigning greater importance to the diagrammatic nature of iconicity over its imagic characteristic. Despite the phonological considerations (the gradual loss of sonority along with the repetition of phonemes expressing Cesar's rapid, intrepid offensive) it is the topology of the phrase that contains co-references, thus reinforcing the metaphoric arbitrariness of signification.

The “proliferation of figures” as Dällenbach describes it⁵ is but a hole in the information-bearing sign system.⁶ In effect, the machinery of gradual layering becomes a dynamic act with a result that could be best compared to an ever-diminishing palimpsest. The vertigo of possible synecdochic, hypertextual interconnections, the blackhole of metonymic, lateral thinking. Regression and progression *ad infinitum*.

The protagonists of *The Music of Chance*, Nashe (a you-have-to-lose-yourself-to-find-yourself Don Quixote) and Pozzi the Jackpot (a poker wizard Sancho Panza) visit Flower and Stone (doubles, Doppelgänger), two eccentric, lottery-winning millionaires in their luxurious mansion to skin them in a game of poker. As expected, Pozzi’s magic touch with the cards works perfectly but suddenly fails them when Nashe—roaming the rooms of the building—inadvertantly removes the models of his hosts from the City of World, the utopian miniature scale-model universe constructed by Stone. From then on they loose 10.000 dollars more than everything they had and finally become prisoners in the ominous confinement of the Four Realms.

“The room was much larger than Nashe had imagined it would be, a place almost barnlike dimensions. With its high *transparent* ceiling and a *pale* wooden floor, it seemed to be all *openness and light*, as if it were a room *suspended in the middle of air*. (...) The only (...) object in the room was an enormous platform that stood in the *center* of the floor, covered with what seemed to be a miniature scale-model rendering of a city.” (my italics)⁷

The space encapsulating the mise en abyme is described here as the white space of signification, where the inevitable laws and forces of semiosis are suspended in mid air. This paragraph announces not simply a suspension of disbelief for the sake of narrative argument, but also the subversion of any kind belief in systematic cohesion. The center of the mise en abyme could not be any more dead then this. This is the transparent vortex of signification.

⁵ Dällenbach, L. 1989. *The Mirror in the Text*. Oxford: Polity.

⁶ If the miniaturised version of shield ‘B’ is placed (mise) in the abyss, in the dead center (en abym) of shield ‘A’ (supposing that shield ‘A’ is a replica of shield ‘B’), then shield ‘B’ occupying and covering a certain territory and thus modifying the structure of shield ‘A’ will formulate an image of shield ‘C’ (i.e. ‘A’ containing ‘B’), which, in turn, will have to contain a presentation of shield ‘D’ displaying shield ‘C’ in the center and so on.

⁷ Auster, P. 1990. *The Music of Chance*. New York: Penguin. pp. 79. From now on the reference is ‘MC’.

"It is called the City of World," (...) "I like working on it," Stone said, smiling tentatively. "It's the way I'd like the world to look. *Everything happens at once.*"

"Willie's city is more than just a toy," Flower said, "it's an artistic vision of mankind. In one way, it's an *autobiography*, but in another way, it's what you might call a *utopia* – a place where the past and future come together, where good finally triumphs over evil. If you look carefully, you'll see that many of the figures represent Willie himself. There, in the playground, you see him as a child. Over there, you see him grinding lenses in his shop as a grown man. There, on the corner of that street, you see the two of us buying the lottery ticket. His wife and parents are buried in the cemetery over here, but there they are again, hovering as *angels* over the house. That's what you might call the *private backdrop*, the *personal material*, the *inner component*." (my italics)⁸

By way of displaying representations of the author in the artifice, the model as a simulacrum directs its vertical extensions both outwards and inwards. The result is an endless chain of 'prime' movers creating an infinite number of universes. Relying on the medieval tradition of representing the diachronic through the synchronic, the mise en abyme also spreads horizontally along the time line. The prophetic function in the prefigurations of the author fades into downright mockery, once you catch the satiric tone of the amateurish mental note in the last sentence.

"But all these things are put in a larger context. They're merely an example, an illustration of one man's journey through the City of the World. Look at the Hall of Justice, the Library, the Bank, and the Prison. Willie calls them the Four Realms of Togetherness, and each one plays a vital role in maintaining the harmony of the city. If you look at the Prison, you'll see that *all prisoners are working happily at various tasks, that they all have smiles on their faces*. That's because they're all glad they've been punished for their crimes, and now they're learning how to recover the goodness within them through hard work. (...) Evil still exists, but the powers who rule over the city have figured out how to transform that evil back into good. Wisdom reigns here, but the struggle is nevertheless constant, and great *vigilance* is required of all the

⁸ MC p. 79

citizens – each *of whom carries the entire city within himself*.
William Stone is a great artist, gentlemen (...).” (my italics)⁹

This rather dystopian then utopian vision of protestant providence serves didactic purposes, the message represented by the entire scenery is inprinted in each of the participants – according to the saint augustian tenet of a system incorporating a larger system within itself.

“Stone looked up, stared at the empty space for a moment, and then smiled in contemplation of the work that lay ahead of him. (...)”
“I’m thinking about doing a separate model of this room. I’d have to be in it, of course, which means that I would also have to build another City of the World. A smaller one, a second city to fit inside *the room within the room*.”

“You mean the model of the model?” Nashe said.

“Yes, a model of the model. But I have to finish everything else first. It would be *the last element, a thing to add at the very end*.”

“Nobody could make anything so small,” Pozzi said, looking at Stone as though he were insane. “You’d go *blind* trying to do a thing like that. (...)”

“But if you did a model of the model,” Nashe said, “then theoretically you’d have to do an even smaller *model of that model*. *A model of the model of the model*. It could go on forever.”¹⁰ (my italics)

The description of the model merging a microcosm with the macrocosm folds into several directions covering all of the five interpretative fields inherent in the *mise en abyme*:

- the prophetic meaning, prefiguration (representing the diachronic through a synchronic model),
- the didactic meaning (preaching normative morality, evil becoming good),
- the satirical effect (protestant vigilance,¹¹ smiling inmates in a concentration camp, mockery autobiographical material, the “blind” optician as an artist, art as life),
- the cognitive meaning (self-reflexivity, regression *ad infinitum*, duplication and triplication, art as work-in-progress), and

⁹ MC p. 80

¹⁰ MC p. 81.

¹¹ The prisoners of the inmates in the City of the World are guarded by ‘Calvin’.

– the mystical, magical control (transparency, whiteness, levitation, the uncanny, which makes the familiar strange, the strange familiar, Nashe destroying the puppets of power).¹²

In the ‘Partial Magic in the *Quixote*’¹³ Borges ruminates on the possible effects generated by the presence of a *mise en abyme*, and arrives at the conclusion that the fascination of the beholder watching a character becoming a spectator (as in *Hamlet*, *Don Quixote*, *The Arnolfini Marriage* by van Eyck or in several Borges short stories) is rooted in the sensation that he himself may well be just as fictitious in character. The blending of epistemological interrogations with ontological statuses destabilizes the arbitrary and this way static relationship between signified and signifier. In Peircean terms the process of signification is a threefold system divided into object, interpretant and representamen.¹⁴ This system places the focus on the role of the interpretant, due to its function to interpret the object as dynamical (a real thing on which an idea is based) or immediate (the idea of a cognized object). As Greenlee commenting on Peirce put it: “the possession of an interpretant [is] the essential condition of signification.”¹⁵

When the workings of semiosis are pushed to the extremes, to its very limits, the seemingly stable role of the interpretant starts unfolding in this loop-hole of exegesis. If the ontological position of the self becomes undecidable within the framework of infinitely multiplying surfaces and identities, it is the *continuity of interpretation* that offers an epistemological paradigm and guarantees the linguistic existence of the disintegrating subject.

Based on the differences and similarities created while dissecting the signifiers from signifieds in the *mise en abyme*, the subject re-establishes his symbolic interiorization of the Imaginary (in the Lacanian sense), rearranges the accessible set of immediate objects. The self is referred to a *hipodiegetic* level, outside of the continuum of narration—or in other words, the reader is told a story and understands something that is not in the story. In *The Music of Chance* the ongoing process of interpreting the differences and similarities between embedding and embedded work is marked by the differing conclusions of the two protagonists. Nashe as an exhausted Don Quixote instinctively chooses the satiric aspect over the prophetic and didactic functions, the cognitive direction instead

¹² White J., John. 2001. In: *The Motivated Sign, Iconicity and Language and Literature 2*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company. p. 34.

¹³ Borges, J.L. 1989. “Magias parciales del *Quijote*”. Barcelona: Emecé. In *Obras Completas*. p. 47.

¹⁴ Peirce, C. S. 1931–59. *Collected Papers*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. p. 228.

¹⁵ Greenlee D. 1973. *Peirce's Concept of Sign*. The Hague-Paris: Mouton.

of mystical. He tempers with the laws of this microcosm, though he couldn't care less, since he is already lost in the most foreboding sense of the word. His companion, a soldier of fortune type of Sancho Panza decides on the opposite, in a way a naïve reader would. In his mystical, magical interpretation tempering with the laws of the simulacrum is like

"(...) violating a fundamental law. We had everything in harmony. We'd come to a point where everything was turning into music for us, and then you have to go upstairs and smash all the instruments. You tempered with the universe, my friend, and once a man does that, he's got to pay the price."¹⁶

Everything that happens after this point in the novel stems from the intertextual game these two interpreters/interpretants play with each other and their shared object: the conundrum of the *mise en abyme*. In the maelström of uncertainty, in the exile of doubt Nashe, who interprets the City of the World by cognitive means, gradually lures himself into sinking lower and lower down the depths of the same abyss Pozzi warned him about.

"Sometimes, powerless to stop himself, he even went so far as to imagine that he was already living inside the model."¹⁷

And it is at this point that Nashe burns the symbols of his sin, the two figures torn out from the space of simulacrum. From Pozzi's point of view this could be understood as an act of revenge (and so he dies a violent death), but Nashe's cognitive aspect makes it an effort to break the continuity of interpretation, to suspend the ongoing cycle of signification. In the final scene the last words emanating from Nashe's focalized view dissolve into the pure white nothingness that pours from the headlights of a car he intently drives into. As an interpretant, sign and interpreter the protagonist ceases to exist outside the sphere of interpretation.

In conclusion, we can state that the semiotic apparatus of infinite regress which is inherent in the *mise en abyme* generates a gap in signification and information, which abyss, in turn, is to be filled by certain functions, which destabilize the interpreter's presuppositions and systematic beliefs. If we accept Beckett's comment that what the artist of the day should look for is but a form that encapsulates the chaos,¹⁸ then probably the reader will agree with the author of this essay that the *mise en abyme* might just do the trick.

¹⁶ MC p.138

¹⁷ MC p. 178

¹⁸ "(...) it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. (...) To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now." Auster quoting Beckett in his *Hand to Mouth*.

THE *GLAMORAMA* AS WORLD MODEL

'God is dead.' (Nietzsche)

'Nietzsche is dead.' (God)

'Both of them are dead.' (Odin)

(graffiti)

Hungarian criticism primarily approaches Bret Easton Ellis's novel, *Glamorama*¹ from particular theoretical problems. These are prominently the problem of the reality-effects (the necessity and impossibility of a referential- or mimetic-principled reading) and the questions of the textual apprehensibility of popular culture (filmic narration, surficiality, subcultural embeddedness, etc.) Although these approaches lead the reader to recognitions which are revealing in a considerable number of cases, they provide few clues concerning the text's readability as a novel. They above all deal with the details and, indeed, with the surficial aspects of the text. Rather, it appears to me that an allegorically organised, coherent system of narrative and metaforic patterns run along the text; the interpretation of which, not least, confronts us precisely with that theoretical possibility that the distinguishability of surface and depth cannot only be admitted as an illusion; or can, but not in the sense as the criticism of logocentrism traditionally conceives it. In my paper, I undertake the task of interpreting the novel by the comparison of these patterns while also looking for the answer how this attitude of the text in relation to signification can be apprehended.

The central theme of the text is conspiracy. Therefore, my first question is what in fact conspiracy is as such. It is a complex structure, formed by an undefined number of elements, in which each element of the system is attached to at least one other, and the map of the links is arborescent, amorphous. Regarding the interplay of the elements, every system element is moved except for one, and several elements are movers as well. Nevertheless, one element is exclusively a mover, i.e. the system contains one (and solely one) unmoved

¹ Bret Easton Ellis: *Glamorama* (1st ed.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). All references are to and all quotations are extracted from this edition. The page numbers of the referred to or quoted parts appear in brackets after each reference or quotation in the text of the paper.

centre. The operation of the system is governed by some kind of law which determines, on the one hand, the rules by which particular elements are joined, and on the other, the rules by which the elements move.² This principle is unknown in every case just as the whole of the structure organised by it. As the object of cognition, the conspiracy becomes a secret, and as a secret waiting for disclosing, it can be divided into two levels. The surface level is composed of systematically recurring motifs, changes, movements which are related to single system elements, and which can be structured according to the aspect of identity and difference and interpreted as signs (symptoms). On the second level, reason, motivation, principle stands, which as a signified can at least be assumed and recognised in principle (i.e. it can be detected).

This system corresponds to the linguistic model of the metaphysics of presence and to its epistemological fundamental, having its base on this very linguistic model, which itself is based on the separability and superposability of the sign and the signified, on the subordination of the sign, and on the principle of representation (i.e. the system corresponds to the aspiration by which the metaphysics of presence strives to map out the referential world relying on the help of causality). In this perspective, as the objects of experience, every phenomenon and thing fits into the same network of an unknown system, where they play or can play the roles of the mover and the moved at the same time. The purpose of cognition is to reach that fixed point which is the ultimate reason of every movement, which is the unmoved itself by exploring the movement and the net of links (the meaning and the sense) of particular elements. The significance of cognition accordingly lies in the fact whether the explored net could really be closed or not, i.e. whether it is complete or not. In other words, in the fact how many elements and how exclusively they are attached to the known reason (the mover).

Consequently, we can rightly expect that the novel is going to tell us about how the characters are connected to the conspiracy. The relevant attribute of the characters will be their position in relation to cognition, and the plot will take shape through the transition of this attribute. According to our first assumption, the conspiracy, despite of all its obscurity and complications, is a local one. Therefore, we would await reading a detective story, learning about the operation of a confinable, circumscribable (a politically and/or socially subversive) system. Our impression is that the bounds of the conspiracy show congruence with the frames of Victor's life. The sequence of oblique hints and motifs leads us to the suspicion that the key figure of the conspiracy is the father, and his aim is to replace Victor with an alter ego. (Lunch with the father,

² Cf. the description of the system with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (XII. 6-7, especially 6, 1071b 4).

the critique of Victor's lifestyle, the necessity of a "new you" [79], the problematics of replacement, the insufficiency of the change of the name [77–82].) Considering all what have just been elaborated above, what in fact can this text be about?

Joining the problematics of genealogy and representation in the relation of the strong father versus the weak son could in principle become interpretable according to the semiotic scheme of fallogocentrism. The assigning of a name as a cultural creative gesture is supposed to provide opportunity for the existence and (self-)representation of the father (and of the ultimate substance at the end of the invisible genealogy chain). The metaforic attachment of the offspring (the signifier) and the begetter (the signified) through the identical name would create the unity and exclusiveness of genealogy (meaning). However, the conspiracy, which seems to be ruled by the father, is precisely working on the metaforic replacement of an offspring who represents the father imperfectly. In this sense, Victor is a bad trope because in his case, two things showing no similarity have been denominated by the same word (name). On the other hand, his alter ego is a trope which represents well because in its case, the same word (name³) refers to a similar entity. So, the correlation of meaning is assured; moreover, it is necessary; actually this is what happens. The two possible agents of cognition and designation would be Victor and/or the father, and similarly, two narrative patterns could unfold further on.

In the first case, Victor, the son, i.e. the level of signifiers would uncover the level of things, i.e. signifieds by unveiling the conspiracy and proving the presence of the father behind it. Accordingly, this would also be the narrative of self-knowledge at the same time, resulting in the reconsideration of the position in the face of the father. As a consequence of the opposition between father and son, the story of some kind of (re)identification process would come to light. It would either reinterpret the relation of the signifier and the signified and bring about a well functioning new trope (reckoning with the father, the declaration of the self as a new meaning) or would reinforce this signification and would frame itself into a good metaphor (i.e. Victor would start to lead a life approved by his father). In the second case, the interpretative gesture would be accomplished by the father, who finally manages to find a well representing son for his self-designation due to the alter ego. The story in this case would tell us about the self-interpretation of the father, in which the fate of Victor would be to disappear in one of its blind spots.

The story comes up to our expectations to the extent that the alter ego on the side of the father really takes over Victor's place (pt. 5), and Victor also exposes the role of the father (400–3). However, our expectations are refuted to

³ "THE TRANSFORMATION OF VICTOR WARD (UH, WE MEAN JOHNSON) [...]" (450).

the extent that single moments of the story cannot be explained by this as a central conception, and the narrative is not closed either. During his acquaintance with things, Victor casts light to systems of conspiracy operating below, above, and next to each other, involving a whole range of (minimum) double agents. He recognizes that Palakon, the father, and Bobby equally and mutually take advantage of each other (and him) to achieve their own goals (421–3). Thus, the centre gets displaced, but it is inscrutable where. The father cannot be the centre because he is controlled as well (by the Japanese, 422), and another, more sophisticated conspiracy is being hatched around him. (The Victor alter ego keeps on acting in undetected affairs [457–9], the appearance of Lorrie Wallace and Palakon on the video record [475].) Bobby cannot be the centre since in spite of his death, everything goes on. Palakon cannot be the centre either because he “ [...] has... no affinity...” (422), or rather, even if he did, the context implies that he could only be a moved element in the system of the conspiracy.

So, the text introduces more and more conspiracies, double agents, and alter egos (Jamie Fields, who—besides Palakon—gives away the most about the whole, is one of them as well [424–6]), which makes us reconsider our previous notions concerning the scope, the number of the moved elements, and the structure of the novel's conspiracy. Such a complex structure is getting outlined in front of us in which the different size subsystems (the simultaneously running conspiracies) possess partial autonomy, and their elements are intricately attached to the elements of other subsystems, making even the status of the immobile centres relative. All the same, they do not extinguish each other; the resultant of their operations points strictly at one direction: at the father, behind the father, at the post of the president, and behind it, at the direction of a global political pursuit (mainly on p. 422). (Its nature is unknown, but it is not relevant in relation to the structure.) Furthermore, the conspiracies are omnipresent in the time and space of the novel's world. (Jamie Fields at the college [467–8]; Abdullah's report presumably about the first appearance of the later Victor alter ego [11]; the started, but not finished fragments of the narrative in pt. 5 concerning the Victor alter ego and the pseudo-Lauryn Hynde, showing up beside him [460–3], or the already mentioned videotape with Palakon, etc.) Every portion of the text's world is produced by the conspiracies; every happening of it is the result of the pulling of the conspiratorial strings. (Or rather, after the novel has introduced alter egos in so great a quantity, presupposing the opposite would be more difficult to justify.) However, in this case, we can no longer talk about conspiracies—at least not in the sense in which we did previously—since they mean reality itself.

Similarly, the logocentric model of cognition conceives the referential world—which it considers to be the most complex organism—as the interaction

of more systems of rules, which are subordinate, superordinate, or co-ordinated to each other, and which are only partly independent from the other. The responsibility for the mapping and exploring of these can be taken by the different disciplines, within which particular subsystems (conspiratorial subthreads) correspond to particular problem fields of each discipline. Since in the text, the conspiracy system gets identified with reality itself, we cannot place anything to its end (or to its dominant centre), but the unmoved mover, the Father.⁴ In short, the conspiracy system is the metaphor for Creation and for the metaphysical absolute behind it; hence, the analogical structure bears its determining features. It is not scrutinizable and not conceivable, but it is present in every space and every time; it creates and rules the world with all its elements⁵ and will also destroy it according to its wish.⁶ What can the text be about in this case?

Against this absolute conspiracy, the stake of cognition is the highest possible. According to our expectations, in the following, the novel is going to tell us about how the level of language, signifiers, cognition (Victor) is revealing the level of the world, things, signifieds, demonstrating the presence of the only fixed point there, the presence of the Father. Thus, the story would again serve as the narrative of self-knowledge at the same time, i.e. as the story of a (re)identificational process based on the widest perspective possible. The presupposition of being the object or the element of the conspiracy, of being a creature would provoke the reconsideration of the position in relation to the Father. In the first case, Victor would again venture to rewrite this signification denying his bond to the ultimate signified. In the second case, by accepting it, he would shape himself into a good metaphor putting on the determining features of the signified.⁷ The latter would be the traditional narrative of cognition concluded by the Christian West. Its prototype is the prodigal son's story in the parables, where the son gets from the lack of knowledge (from false believes), through sin, to the perception of Truth, to conversion.

⁴ Cf. the theological system of Saint Thomas Aquinas (that phase of the Aristotle reception which had the most significant effect on Christian theology) with special regard to his "five ways" (*Summa Theologiae* 1a, q2, a3).

⁵ Cf. "[...] he's erasing people, he's inventing a new world, seamlessy. 'You can move planets with this,' Bentley says. 'You can shape lives. The photograph is only the beginning.'" (357-8).

⁶ Cf. "The extent of the destruction is a blur and its aftermath somehow feels beside the point. The point is the bomb itself, its placement, its activation—that's the statement. [...] It's really about the will to accomplish this destruction and not about the outcome because that's just decoration." (296).

⁷ Imitatio Christi; cf. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4.24).

The text comes up to our expectations to the extent that it suggests the frame of this narrative scheme in the form of allusions; however, it also refutes them to the extent that it suggests so only in a way as if that scheme was unnarratable. The alter ego converts to the principles of the father (446); it rereads Dostoyevsky (*ibid.*); its deeds are explained as repentance by the others (455); it functions perfectly as a metaphor; however, it does not tell us about what is really going on. On the other side, Victor seems to get (at least regarding the volume of the conspiracy) from sheer incompetence to the complete understanding of the system.⁸ He wants to communicate the truth, which he sees more and more clearly, with the purpose of saving others;⁹ he shows the development of the intention of help and compassion in himself as new characteristics;¹⁰ he strives to prevent further destructions;¹¹ by this time he feels responsibility for the father (347); he watches himself from an entirely new perspective as a sign of the change of his identification;¹² he feels regret,¹³ and he shows the feeling of self-accusation (478). Furthermore—after the disorders of his short- and long-term memories—as the primary condition of fashioning self-identity, he begins to remember, confronting his past and present selves.¹⁴ In short, Victor's transformation follows what has been expected; however, its interpretation (declaration), i.e. true cognition, fails to come about. The question remaining after all these is to what extent the language of the fictional world can account for this.

If any meaning can be assumed in this world, it is undoubtedly the concept of being “in” (cf. first on p. 5), trendy. If cognition can have any objects, they are certainly the celebrities and products in who and in which this concept is embodied. If the process of signification can be assumed, it can be ensured by the brand and celebrity names, which promise to guarantee the

⁸ Especially his conversations with Palakon and Jamie Fields (406–7, 421–6) and finally the videotape (475).

⁹ He wants to help the French prime minister's son (321–2) and Felix (349–53).

¹⁰ Bentley (416–9), Jamie Fields (421), Chloe (426–30).

¹¹ Bobby's murder (432–6), a (hopeless) attempt to prevent the explosion of the airplane (436–8).

¹² “On the radio: something emblematic of where I'm at this moment, something like ‘Don't Fear the Reaper’ or ‘I'm a Believer.’” (342)

¹³ “How many warnings had I ignored?” (477).

¹⁴ “[...] on that afternoon [...] a few decisions had to be made [...] I had to accept this if I wanted to get anywhere. [...] I [...] made a promise to myself [...] The future started mapping itself out [...] But [...] at that point I had no way of understanding one thing: if I didn't erase this afternoon from my memory [...], sections of this afternoon would come back to me in nightmares. [...] I faded away and my image overlapped and dissolved into an image of myself years later [...]” (480–1). Further on: 403, 467–8.

exclusiveness of meaning even only by the notion of trade mark. This mode of signification appears in its clearest form in the specific listings of the register at the club opening party. They would represent the most steady parts of the text concerning signification and the most compact ones concerning meaningfulness.¹⁵

These texts are built up by identical sequences which are in principle supposed to represent identical semantical contents (the invited celebrities). It is impossible to interpret them referentially because most of them (justly) refers to an unknown signified, and how they differ from each other is not specified. Since in the text, most of the sequences do not appear twice either (apart from the names of the main characters and one or two determinant exceptions), they cannot be interpreted inside the fictional world either because they cannot be recognised as signs. So, although their difference is given, this only allows each sequence to create a unit of empty space equivalent to the others behind itself. Though it is clear that not all of the names are unfamiliar (and it is very likely that they can all be referentialised), the intertextual signs themselves (known from other texts of the referential world) cannot be interpreted either. On the one hand, because the sequences referring to known signifieds correlate semantical contents which do not belong together,¹⁶ and hence the lists can only be regarded coherent (Victor surely considers them as such) if—in this context—they do not mean what we may relate to them in the referential world. On the other hand, provided that meaning formation is the result of the given system of differences, the known signs—transferred to a system considerably based on equivalency—cannot function in any other way either, just according to the same system. Consequently, they can only be interpreted as linguistic elements homonymous with particular known proper names, but without known meanings. However, since in the language of the novel the rule that difference is conceived as identity (and vice versa)¹⁷ seems to be quite a general one, even the

¹⁵ The metaphoric of cognition told by Victor when part of the list is being read out: “‘Yes’ [...] ‘Fine’ [...] ‘I am *shuddering* with pleasure.’ [...] ‘Somebody needs to hose—me—down.’ [...] ‘Fan-fucking-tastic.’ [...] ‘Faster.’ [...] ‘More, more, more—’ [...] ‘Oh boy, we’re in the hot zone now.’” (70–2). The same in the next chapter from Buddy Seagull when Victor is selling the Hurley Thomson gossip to him: “‘Now I’m vaguely enthralled.’ [...] ‘I’m getting a little hot.’ [...] ‘You’re stroking my boner’ [...] ‘I’m rock hard. Continue.’”, etc. (75–6).

¹⁶ Cf. “*Nike* [...] *Beavis and Butt-head* [...] *Jeff Koons*, *Nicole Kidman*, *Howard Stern* [...] *Huckleberry Finn* [...]” (185).

¹⁷ Cf. the utterances with definitive value, e.g. “‘Shit’ [...] ‘Um, I mean that in a good way.’” (8); “‘No, in is out. Out is in.’” (15); “‘I want something unconsciously classic. I want no distinctions between exterior and interior, formal and casual, wet and dry, black and white, full and empty [...]’” (51); “‘Jesus, it could apply to anything,’ I mutter. ‘So ultimately it’s like meaningless.’” (105). With reference to causality cf. “

theoretical assumption of the difference of meaning is questionable. So, this pseudo-language does not have any designates.

After all these, the fact that alter egos and actors are/can be made to appear on the scene in such a quantity is hardly suprising. At the same time, by the introduction of the filmic levels, another operation emerges in the language of the text, which works just in the opposite direction as the one—which may be identified as a horizontal merging—mentioned above. (The structure of the film levels with the apperance of actors and alter egos as signifiers in the first place can also be approached as a semiotic model.) The filmic narratives below each other get repeated endlessly. At particular points (where the characters join them), they intersect, but never cover each other. As the objects of cognition, some figures (subjects) are signifieds on their own. Yet, as actors (alter egos), they stand in the position of signifiers; they serve as the signifiers of the played characters (roles). Nevertheless, showing this acting from a different perspective; moreover, showing this shooting from an even newer perspective, the signified (the played character) becomes a signifier (an actor), etc. The filmic narratives intersecting each other construct the structural model of postponement. The (self-) identities (characters, roles) get differentiated (cf. *différance*); the meanings (scripts) disseminate. Hence, the centre of the conspiracy system necessarily disappears in the fabric of the script and film levels, which can be comprehended as the metaphor of the postmodern (deconstructive) understanding of signification.

It is as if we had the chance to understand Victor's story as a linear one by following the transformation of his relation to this kind of language. This narrative is anticipated in the metaphoricality of the following question (NB during the journey, ergo unavoidably during the Journey): " 'Really—there's fog?' I ask, having assumed that I had been staring at a giant gray wall but actually it's a huge window [...]" (215). At the beginning of the story, Victor disseminates and merges meanings;¹⁸ he does not understand or know anything;¹⁹ he cannot and does not want to say anything. Contrary to him, the characters (lovers, movie makers, agents, etc.) around him possess some kind of knowledge and attempt to put it into his mouth (in the form of warnings,

'[...] in no particular order [...]' " (14 and the same later on pp 66, 139, and 307).

¹⁸ " 'Jesus. As usual, you're so literal-minded.' " (24); " 'Literally or figuratively?' 'Is there a difference with you?' she asks. 'How can you be so dense?' " (35); " 'I want some kind of answer from you,' she says calmly. 'Don't free-associate. Just tell me why' " (176); " 'Did you...understand the question?' [...] 'Maybe you've misunderstood my answers.' " (142), etc.

¹⁹ " 'I don't know anything, JD. Nothing, nada. Remember that. I...know...nothing. Never assume I know anything. Nada. Nothing. I know nothing, not a thing. Never—' " (7).

cautions, instructions, etc.)²⁰ again and again. Despite the fact that Victor's idiocy is obvious for everybody, regarding the signifying rules of the fictional world, it is only he who practises language adequately since in this world these exact kinds of statements—e.g. “I KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING” (105 and from that page till the end)—are impossible, even if they are true. However, the virtuosic word-plays and misunderstandings/misinterpretations together with Victor's wisdoms are abating as the story advances, and by the end of the novel, they give their place to a naive, unreflected, meaning-centred usage of language.²¹ By this time, it is Victor who would strive to communicate in possession of a wider knowledge, but the addressed ones do not understand him.²²

Victor first problematizes the relation of language and the possibilities of cognition directly in the opening lines of the novel. The reading of the “specks”—which appear on the “third panel” (accidentally right at the beginning of the thirty-third chapter, in pt. 1), which “look like they were somehow done by a machine” (5), and which seem to be “glowing”, what is more “spreading” (6)—does not tell us more than metafiction tells us any other times, i.e. that only the space of language and signification can be taken for granted. Victor's own “story” (i.e. the “who, what, where, [and] when” of the story [5]) itself is the process of signification. As a subject, he wholly shares the language that this world speaks, thus his constant characteristic cannot be anything else, but meaninglessness, misunderstanding, self-contradiction, and instability. However, after his metaphor (the alter ego) takes over his place in the level of signifiers, and because he himself does not have the opportunity to appear on the scene in a new role as a signifier,²³ his existence (captivity) as the—hypothetic—object of cognition (as a signified) becomes inaccessible for the usage of language. The meaning, i.e. the direction from which he speaks (the intention of help) and himself, of whom he

²⁰ “‘No,’ he says. ‘It’s all clear to us.’ [...] ‘It’s only sketchy to you.’” (165); “‘See, Victor, the problem is you’ve got to know things,’ she says. ‘But you don’t.’” (173); “‘Everything you know is *wrong*.’” (176); “‘It’s what you don’t know that matters most [...]’” (283), etc.

²¹ Cf. “‘At first I was confused by what passed for love in this world: people discarded because they were too old or too fat or too poor [...], they weren’t hip, they weren’t remotely famous. This was how you chose lovers. This was what decided friends. [...] On the verge of tears—because I was dealing with the fact that we lived in a world where beauty was considered an accomplishment—I turned away [...]’” (480–1), or cf. the sentence quoted under footnote 12.

²² The son of the French prime minister and Felix (footnote 9), the sister (468–9, 476), the evoking and reinterpretation of the sentence “*I know who you are and I know what you’re doing*” by him at this time (437).

²³ “‘Your role is over, Victor,’” says the director of (one of?) the French crew(s) (471).

wants to give news (the telephone calls to his sister) are profound secrets, and both remain unuttered and unutterable. By the end of the novel, Victor's and his company's usage of language, following the change-over of the alter egos,²⁴ occupies a chiasitic opposition in relation to each other.

He reflects on this in the closing chapter while he is most likely to be shot in the back of the neck²⁵ by that certain Uzi which has been loaded earlier, in pt. 6, ch. 13, precisely when the reality and the unfathomability of the conspiracy gain final proof. The mountain is always a probable scene for forming connection with the sacral. Life flows in the valley, on the fields, on the highways just like in the picture. The mountain is unknown, a secret,²⁶ and at its feet lies language itself: the "villagers [...] celebrating in a field of long grass" on the hither side and the "highway" lined with "billboards" on the farther side, behind the mountain.

"The stars are real." If I understand it literally, Victor talks about some figures of the picture. If he means celebrities, he says a figure of speech. It is only representation that is real.

"The future is that mountain." In this sense the metaphoric mountain is either unreachable, or one can only saunter off from it to the highway, back to the territory of language. The questions and the promises of the answers are there somewhere, "[at] any point beyond [the mountain]".

To sum up, the alter ego signifies something, but not what is really there. Falling out from the signifying process, Victor remains unuttered. It is only substitution that is real; what is really there, cannot be worded.

The text represents the concepts of language and cognition as both the postmodern and the metaphysics of presence conceive them by the trope system of a complex metaphoric allegory based on structural analogy. The annihilation of reality (the explosions, the murders, etc.), the apocalyptic narrative itself stem from the inner, metaphoric logic of allegorization, and in the reading of the novel it is conceived as the ground state of Creation.

Certain motifs of the text obviously offer themselves for this approach. (As a matter of fact, sometimes with even too suspicious an obviousness.) The smell of shit and flies: the collateral accessories of decay. Cold, hoar, ice: they are all associated with distance, isolation, atomization. Teutonic cross and pentagrams at

²⁴ As the file names prove, by that time—expectedly—both the father and the sister are alter egos (358).

²⁵ Watching the "mural", he says, "I'm *falling forward* but also *moving up* toward the mountain [...]" (482, italics mine). Earlier: "'Someone is going to extract you from this sooner or later,' the director says."—ambiguously, specially as a few lines later he presumably apostrophes the same person as a war criminal (471).

²⁶ Cf. "*The question about the hat will never be asked. The question about the hat is a big black mountain and the room is a trap.*" (341).

the beginning and the ending of the novel (16, 415–6): the symbols of apocalyptic ideas. Confetti: occupying, covering up, legitimizing something. Victor's alter ego as the "wolf in a lamb's clothing" (cf. Matthew 7.15 and Revelations 13.11–2) is the anticipation of the antichrist.²⁷ However, instead of the horsemen of the apocalypse, we persistently come across the Japanese and rugby-player hippies taking their Pekineses for a walk.

The numbering of the different sections of the text in this approach can be interpreted as follows. The numbering of the parts—which starts and increases from one (1)—would be the apocalyptic narrative itself, inside which perpetual destruction and the reaching of the endpoint is taking place. This is an onward, never-ending count-down. Thus, the chapters would mean the chain of the moments of devastation, the gradual narrowing down (of the opportunities and the scope of motion), the falling back, the annihilation. Nevertheless, these two numberings are not simply the opposites of each other. So far as the chapters within a part always arrive at zero (0), the apocalyptic narrative can only count with something already existing, i.e. with Creation, with the one (1) since it exists from the beginning. The last chapter joins the two numberings; in it the numbering of the chapters is already increasing, but from zero (0). The final annihilation (0) as the condition of the advancement of the apocalyptic narrative is here already running parallel with the forward movement.

The interpretation of the mottoes²⁸ can be the following. The sentence attributed to Krishna is a revelation signed as coming from God and states the meaning of the ultimate substance, an identical meaning (you, *I*, these) being present behind and in everything. This utterance reveals and attempts to make us see²⁹ a knowledge which is beyond the interrelations (language, causality) the secular world can see. In the extract ascribed to Hitler, Hitler provides the

²⁷ Cf. " 'Don't fear the reaper, Victor,' Deepak says [...] 'I *am* the fucking reaper, Deepak,' [...]" (445–6). (Cf. footnote 12.)

²⁸ "There was no time when you nor I nor these kings did not exist.—Krishna. You make mistake if you see what we do as merely political.—Hitler"

²⁹ In spite of the fact that this text structurally resembles to the "out-is-in"-like parts of the novel and in its meaning to the appearance of alter egos, from this point of view the East can be set in parallel both with the postmodern concept of language (regarding its conception about the signifying process) and with the metaphysics of presence (regarding its conclusion). (Every difference is the result of the deceptive operation of consciousness and language; in fact everything is The Same; none of them is That.) This conception occurs only once in the novel, but at a distinguished point. In pt. 5, when we confront with the unnarratability of the narrative of cognition, the Indian guru, Deepak makes a similar statement to Victor's alter ego: " 'You see that bench?' [...] 'It's also you,' [...] 'You, Victor, are also that bench.' " (445). The invoking of the East in this case seems to open the door to the blending of the logocentric and the postmodern concepts of language.

indirect interpretation of his and his supporters' deeds as an alternative for a different interpretation. What these deeds would exactly be is not known, but on the one hand, in case they can be confused with politics—because though they are not „merely” political, they obviously bear that quality as well—they are necessarily acts (a text) which own(s) an unfixed centre and have (has) no inherent meaning. On the other hand, these deeds evoke apparently apocalyptic notions. The first motto, disrupting the linguistic and causal relations, points from the sacral towards man. The second points from man, through language, to the desacralized world. The first states the existence of meaning and faces us with the impossibility of a linguistic-causal cognition. The second implies a meaning which is in continuous motion and gives its linguistic-causal-natured interpretation.

The two texts occupy the same chiasmic opposition in relation to each other as Victor and his alter ego do. If we treat the opposition as a question, this question refers exactly to the most important moments of the novel: to the existence or the lack of meaning, to the possibility or impossibility of cognition, to the role of language within that, and to the sacral references of these; i.e. to the rereading of the postmodern discourse of cognition—itself rereading the metaphysics of presence—which, in my approach, is finally the central problem of the novel.

I think that the main concern of *Glamorama* is not the nature of textual operations, but the nature of reality, which the novel conceives as a text in the widest sense. Principally, the work is not interested in the theoretical problems of signification, but in the practice of signification and interpretation proceeding in the referential world. It regards the whole postmodern discourse (particularly deconstruction) as a tradition having been read into *topoi*, and thinking over tradition taken in this sense, it creates its own patent absurdity. It re-evaluates the most productive theoretical commonplaces by inserting them into a structure which can be understood as some kind of synthesis of the inseminal and disseminative text models. It does not presume an accessible ultimate signified, but it considers certain pseudo-meanings to be inherent. It treats the impossibility of referential representation as an evidence; nevertheless, it seems to conceive itself as a mirror capable of showing reality in its totality. And what can be gathered from this mirror is above all not some kind of (trifling) metaphysical moral, but the existence of this complex (combined) textual pattern itself as the primary principle underlying cultural motions.

Translated by Zsuzsa Maczák

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*THE GLAMORAMA AS SIMULACRUM*¹

The 1998 *Glamorama*² bespeaks well those textual features which might be familiar from earlier works as the trade-marks of the author. Comparing it with the author's previous novels and short stories, indeed, the similarities strike us first: the main character due to the first person, present tense narration is a narrator at once; the characters are primarily individualized by the well-known brands of consumer society; and the recurring enumeration of the stratum of the represented entities evokes the feeling of familiarity, authenticity, and accuracy in the recipient. From the point of view of the Ellisian novel-poetics, the common features in connection with the above-mentioned and also with e.g. the contradictory nature of the main characters' disposition are especially relevant in the parallel of *Glamorama* and *American Psycho*.³ From our standpoint, however, the differences are more important. Can *Glamorama* confront us with something new in comparison with the earlier texts, or is it simply a further combination of the usual narrative panels? The question is justified all the more since the reception of the novel strongly reminds us of the reception of the previous one. This time, years after the scandalous reception of *American Psycho*, the author had to refute in interviews again that Victor Ward would in fact be him and that his private life and the events of the novel would be identical in any way.⁴ Although such an uncritical application of referential

¹ The present and the following study of the volume summarize observations concerning *Glamorama* which originate in a common project investigating the aspects of Bret Easton Ellis's prose. Apart from their several parallels, the two studies, of course, come to different conclusions.

² Bret Easton Ellis, *Glamorama* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999). All subsequent extracts are from and all subsequent references are to this edition. The relevant page numbers always appear in brackets right after the given reference or extract in the text of the paper.

³ Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho* (London: Picador, 1991).

⁴ Cf. "[...] I really believe that the readers are smart and sophisticated enough to realize that the author is not the narrator of his novels. Writing fiction is an act of imagination and fantasizing, and it's not relating in prose what you've been doing for the last two or three years." (Joshua Klein, "Interview with Bret Easton Ellis," available: www.avclub.com/content/node/24229, access: 15 March 2006.) Nevertheless, an extract from another interview in which Ellis originates the character of Patrick Bateman in his father and in himself seems to contradict the afore-cited thought: "I identified with

reading has already been considered out-of-date for a long time, we cannot under-estimate such an attitude since it informs us about that fundamental interpretative uncertainty articulated even by a certain fraction of professional readers claiming that the quality of the novel is at least problematical.

In one of his interviews, Ellis pointed out that the chief novelty of *Glamorama* is the plot, more precisely, the fact that "it has a plot, or at least an identifiable narrative that [his] other novels really don't have", which, according to him, is in connection with the choice of topic, in particular with the theme of conspiracy.⁵ With full knowledge of the novels preceeding *Glamorama*, it is obvious—though it does not become evident from the context of the interview—that the point here is not that a metafictional practice gets replaced by a story-centred, linear poetics;⁶ the change could be rather measured by the fact that in *Glamorama*, an expansive narrative (a conspiracy) organizes the plot in contrast with e.g. *American Psycho*, whose subject (the "confessions" of a serial killer yuppie) favours a minimalist novel-structure based on loosely-joint micronarratives.⁷ The atmosphere of the conspiracy is inherently characterized by a certain mysteriousness, enigmaticness. Perhaps we do not say anything new if we presume that the reader's expectations concerning a novel which thematizes a conspiracy is going to be organized around the actual enigma; or to put it in other words, the reception is going to be motivated by the promise of the unravelling of the enigma. Thus, what Catherine Belsey asserts about the plot in classic realism is going to be true just the other way round in the case of *Glamorama*, which is about conspiracy. While those texts narrating murder, war, journey, or love only employ enigma as one of their *possible* means,⁸ it is the enigma itself that makes the main subject-matter here, and all the other themes get subordinated to this in service of the exposition, the narrative.

Patrick Bateman initially because in a lot of ways he was like me. He was young, he was successful, he lived a certain kind of lifestyle, and so in that respect I saw him often as myself. That's why I consider the novel autobiographical. At the same time, I think it was a criticism of the way my father lived his life because he did slip into that void." (Jamie Clarke, "An Interview with Bret Easton Ellis," available:

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/8506/Ellis/clarkeint.html>, access: 15 March 2006.)

⁵ Cf. "An interview with Bret Easton Ellis," available:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0199/ellis/interview.html>, access: 15 March 2006.

⁶ Such as in case of Paul Auster, at whom we can detect a similar tendency after his *New York Trilogy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).

⁷ For the definition of minimalism cf. Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's study. "Minimalism vs. Postmodernism in Contemporary American Fiction," *Neohelicon* 1 (2001): 129–43.

⁸ Cf. Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London–New York: Methuen, 1980), 70.

Right at the very beginning of the novel, we come across a self-reflexive part referring to such an enigmaticness:

[...] so I don't want a lot of description, just the story, streamlined, no frills, the lowdown: who, what, where, when and don't leave out why, though I'm getting the distinct impression by the looks on your sorry faces that *why* won't get answered—now, come on goddamnit, what's the *story*? (5)

The sequence “what's the story?” refers to the events of the text in a way that at the same time it also indicates the distance between the narrator and the narrated. This gesture is interesting because it repeats one of the immanent functions of the present tense narration. The present tense here implicitly expresses that each event is happening ‘right now’ at the moment of our reading;⁹ therefore, the narrator does not have an overlook on the whole story; it can only reflect on the current events. The afore-cited question “what's the story?” creates the same relation; its meaning is ‘I don't know the story, somebody tell me’. All the same, in a paradoxical way, it also undermines the narrator's ignorance allowing for that ‘right now’. How can it be that a person who can possess knowledge concerning exclusively the past and the present knows a story which assumes the knowledge of the future? Thereby, the relation between narrator and narrated suggested by the present tense gets shattered in its base. The fore-mentioned distance comes into being, which makes it possible that we attribute such level to the text where the how of the text's/the reception's operation is coded. In the narrative structure of the novel, we can find more similar discrepancies when the motivated first person narrator gives evidence of such knowledge to which he cannot have access through his own experience, through the reports of witnesses, or through the technics of reading-off, i.e. when the narrator infers information from external sources: the characters' appearance, acts, words. The discrepancy at issue is well represented by the following example:

I hop on the Vespa, kick it into gear and speed up Park *without* looking back, *though if* I had been *I would've seen* Lauren yawning while she waved for a cab. (128, italics mine)¹⁰

⁹ Dorrit Cohn emphasizes three functions of the present tense: it can mean a single, momentary action, a repeated action, and generalizations or eternal truths. Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds* (Princeton–New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 190.

¹⁰ In the Hungarian translation (Bret Easton Ellis, *Glamoráma*, trans. Miklós M. Nagy, [Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 2000]), the other place in the text which testifies the unreliability of the narrator is the consequence of an evident negligence on the part of the

The frequent recurring of the questions concerning the circumstances of the story in the first part of the novel propounds that the text sooner or later will provide the answers. Part one—which embraces the organization of a club opening and the events of the first party (*what*) in New York (*where*) in the 1990's (*when*)¹¹—ends on a note that seemingly gives all the answers, which then gradually ease the process of reception and foster the understanding of the story. According to these, Victor's (*who*) career (*why*) would stand in the focus of the novel since we have got over almost half of the text. To understand the plot of the first part, which parades hundreds of celebrities, and Victor's existential, power position, the reader's familiarity with popular culture, with its events (conceived as a text or intertext), illustrious participants and discourses will be a basic requirement, and the comparison of the signifiers demands an intertextual strategy. According to the model of popular culture taking shape in *Glamorama*, this space cannot be divided into active and passive consumer levels. Everybody is a potential producer and consumer at the same time: from door-keepers, waiters, through models on their way to the top, to 'real' stars. While *American Psycho* presented merely the endless enumeration of objects and items, *Glamorama* lists the actors/actresses, sportsmen/-women, models, the individuals of the media, and other important people literally (cf. the list of the invited for the opening party). Practically, they extinguish each other's *meaning*(fulness) because they gain their sign- and newsvalue not in comparison to other celebrities in a hierarchy fixed from an external point of view, but in the judgements of their currency given by this culture's consumers. On the other hand, only those signifiers mingle with the reliable signifiers, owning denotatum, which possess a designate, i.e. such signifiers whose signifieds do not exist in our actual world:

People told us that they either were *vampires* or knew someone who was a *vampire*. (102, italics mine);

translator: the Hungarian equivalents of the sentences "She looks over at where I'm shivering, slumped in a giant *white* chair." (202, italics mine) and "[...] I say, panting, sitting up in the giant *white* chair." (203, italics also mine) are "Rám néz, ahogy ott reszketek, összegömyedve egy óriási, *fekete* [black] székben." (*Glamorama*, 253, italics mine) and "[...] mondom zihálva, és felülök az óriási *fehér* [white] székben." (ibid., 256, italics also mine).

¹¹ The problems in connection with the handling of time unintentionally break down the diegesis of the present: there can be antinomies between the reader's knowledge and the informational base of the text, e.g. 2pac Shakur, the rapstar, who appears in the text as a living character, died in a street gun-fight after the publication of the novel (120).

[...] and in the main room the director, assistant director, lightning cameraman, gaffer, chief electrician, two more assistants, Scott Benoit, *Jason Vorhees' sister*, Bruce Hulce, Gerlinda Kostiff, scenic ops and a Steadicam operator stand around a very large egg [...] (113, italics mine);

[...] Henry Rollins, *Nike*, Kim Deal, *Beavis and Butt-head*, Anita Hill, Jeff Koons, Nicole Kidman [...] O. J. Simpson, Michael DeLuca [...] Bruno Beuilacqua di Santangelo, *Huckleberry Finn*, Bill Murr (212-3, italics mine).

Because the proper names referring to existing people and the names of the figures familiar from different fictional worlds become parts of the same semiotic chain (besides the so far mentioned, the characters appearing in Ellis's previous works also belong to the latter ones), and because in principle, every name can be substituted for any other due to the unarticulatedness¹² of their difference, the interpretative process of the referencialization of the signifiers splits, and the referential reading comes to a halt.

In spite of the fact that not only the products and objects of popular culture can be reproduced, duplicated, or substituted, but also the institutions and the participants of the cultural happenings,¹³ from the point of view of the characters, it is still possible to actually set up various hierarchies since they themselves are active interpreters of the cultural events presented by the novel. These hierarchies are built around currency, which, however, never means constant positionedness. The momentarily changing conditions of the ratibility of currency vary so fast, they are so relative that it is impossible to follow the rules of the game unless one adjusts oneself to the movement determined by persistent change not free from contradictions either. A conversation being formed between Victor and one of his subordinates, JD clearly demonstrates that the token of currency does not call for comprehension, but for fast adaptability to the conditions:

¹² Apart from a few exceptions, the names of the invited celebrities show up only once.

¹³ Examples for similarity: "[...] and we're all eating muesli and have sideburns and everything would be flat and bright and pop if it wasn't so early." (50) and "All the guys basically look the same: cute head (one exception), great body, high hair, chiseled lips, cutting edge, naughty or however you want us." (66-7) and "[...] all the guys are so similar-looking it's getting tougher and tougher to tell them apart." (72).

"I mean," JD continues, "I think comparatively it's pretty in."

"But in is out," I explain, squinting to see where we're heading.

[...]

"What are you saying, Victor?"

"Out is in. Got it?"

"In is... not in anymore?" JD asks. "Is that it?"

I glance at him as we descend the next flight of stairs. "No, in is out. Out is in. Simple, non?"

[...]

"See, out is in, JD."

"Victor, I'm really nervous as it is," he says. "Don't start with me today."

"You don't even have to think about it. Out is in. In is out."

"Wait, okay. In is out? Do I have that down so far?"

[...]

"Right. Out is in."

"But then what exactly *is* in?" JD asks, his breath steaming.

"*Out* is, JD."

"So... *in* is *not* in?"

"That's the whole p-p-point." It is so cold my biceps are covered with goose bumps.

"But then what's *out*? It's *always* in? What about specifics?"

"If you need this defined for you, maybe you're in the wrong world,"

I murmur. (16-7).

At this point, Victor Ward appears as an expert of the laws of the fictional world, i.e. as an authoritative person. As not a particular class of things appear to be trendy ("in"), but everything that is not trendy ("out"), we get an ostensibly simple logical formula based on contrast and inversion for the definition of the notion of trendiness. However, JD's question, "What about specifics?", from this aspect, does not only tell us about incomprehension and methodical disorder, but also about an arbitrariness lying in the determination of the quality of trendiness and untrendiness, and about the fact that the rule is actually that there are no rules, only subjects with more or less power, who attempt to obscure this fact precisely by their rule-forming activities. Victor has the right to declare what is "in" while JD's inferior position does not allow him to do that. Although Victor is not always able to articulate verbally this power of his in relation to everybody (e.g. he begs for pocket money from his father in vain; his boss, Damien humiliates him again and again; in the interview he gave to Music Television, it is his cultural obtuseness which gets revealed; and Lauren strives to make herself independent from the values of the presented world), due to the

pretences, lies, cheats, what is more, occasionally to his own idiocy, he obtains such an advantage which provides predominance or at least an equal position for him in relation to those people who are interested in the events of this subculture. The turn of the plot is precisely anticipated by the unveiling of the arbitrariness and eventuality of this power, i.e. by the fact that more and more characters begin to turn his own reasoning against Victor:

"You think you know everything, Chloe."

"I think a fuck of a lot more than you do, Victor", she says.

"Everyone knows a fuck of a lot more than you do and *it's not* cute." (182);

[...] and Hurley's [...] hissing into my ear, "I know what you did, you fuck, I know what you said, you dumb fuck," and then he steps on my face [...] (189);

He [Damien] sighs, studying me, rubs a hand over his face. "You act very hard to be cool, Victor, but really you're very normal." Pause. "You're a loser." He shrugs. "You're an easy target with a disadvantage." (196).

After Victor's moral, professional, and private-life fiascos, according to the traditional "up-and-down" moral of the career novels, it is Victor's rise that should follow due to F. Fred Palakon's commission, worth \$300,000, according to which Victor has to travel to London to search for the lost Jamie Fields, whom he dated as a college student. Besides the concretization of the conspiracy (it turns out that a group consisting of models organizes different terror actions all around the world), one of the most important development of the second content unit is that Victor is not only compelled to gradually give up his power positions, but he also loses his autonomy in his role as a narrator.

The presence of the different crews, film-makers, photographers determines the layer of the stratum of the represented entities in *Glamorama* from the very beginning: owing to his job, the visual media ab ovo has a great influence on Victor's life; under the title THE MAKING OF A CLUB, they shoot a videofilm about the details of the club opening (6); Victor struggles to get a role—among others—in the movie called *Flatliners II* (31); he gives an interview to Music Television (203–6), etc. Moreover, the frequent use of film jargon—besides the importance of a permanent presence in the media, which is one of the standards of trendiness—also testifies that the differences among the rules working in the fictional worlds presented by the media, in the empirical world presented by the media, and in the empirical world experienced by the

characters are unimportant in Victor's approach: "The whole point of Super Mario Bros. is that it mirrors life." (25). By the end of part 1, this metaphorical equivalence becomes literal: the crews quasi take over the control of the plot. The first unequivocal reference to this reads as the following: "[...] and the director leans in to me and warns 'You're not looking worried enough,' which is my cue to leave Florent." (194).

The logic of the *simulacrum*—in Baudrillard's words, "to simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't"¹⁴—becomes noteworthy from this point on. Here, every boundary gets utterly abolished between the original and the model, the represented and the representer. Of course, simulation does not become the upmost feature of the fictional world at one blow, right from the given page; rather, this possibility gains a contextual support from this point on, i.e. those references which were so far incomprehensible, or seemingly comprehensible merely in connection with the opening of the party and with Victor's intricate private life, obtain new meanings in the light of the conspiracy. Although we previously treated the scenarios as sources, which, of course, suggests the validity of the above oppositions, the changing scripts and crews (the latter ones even liquidate each other), the actors playing themselves, the actors' alter egos (or rather, the actors playing the actor alter egos?) who perform their deaths, finally convince us that neither the conspiracy, nor the narration has a definite starting point.

That is, as soon as we assign the people or group responsible for the conspiracy, it emerges almost immediately—by the same or even by different reasons—that those in belief of being able to manipulate others are also wire-pulled. Hence, in chronological order, we could presume the following people to be the potential heads of the conspiracy: (i) those who know more compared to Victor (Alison, Chloe, Hurley Thomson, and Damien); (ii) the scenarist, cameraman, producer, and director of every crew, who provide Victor with scripts and (sometimes inconsistent) instructions (Felix and the American crew, the members of the French crew, and other not named crews); (iii) Bobby Hughes and his gang of models; (iv) acquaintances, friends from the years spent at Camden College (Sean Bateman, Jamie Fields, Lauren Hynde, and Bertrand Ripleys); (v) the Japanese; (vi) F. Fred Palakon; (vii) the mysterious Mr. Leisure, who organizes Victor's last journey, to Milan; (viii) and finally the senator father. Although it is very likely that the father settles Victor's European stay in the interest of his own political career, on evidence of the allies of the originally hostile forces, the betrayals, the operations of the double or triple agents, we can come to the conclusion that no source, no defined objective, or any kind of regularity can

¹⁴ Cf. Jean Baudrillard's study: "Simulacra and Simulations," in Mark Poster ed., *Selected Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166–84.

be attached to the conspiracy. This is fully supported by the fact that after the pseudo-Victor's appearance in New York, who is in full service of the father's political reputation, the murders, outrages, explosions, memorizations of codes and passwords still go on.

Nevertheless, as the conspiracy is getting more and more complicated, it is not purely the illusion of Victor's existential autonomy that gets wrecked, but his narratory competence also becomes questionable. Therefore, the narrative structure of *Glamorama* practically gets exposed to the earlier mentioned forces. From the point on that Victor starts to act according to directorial commands, his narration for the most part confines to the repetition of scenarios, i.e. to something that has been worded by someone else earlier. Although we can appreciate the descriptions of the shootings, rehearsals, dropped scenes, and shooting breaks as Victor's narratory achievements, the source of this kind of narration will be the text of the scenarios.¹⁵ Thus, Victor not only proves to be an unreliable narrator because occasionally he turns out to know more than the present tense narration would allow him, but also because in other cases he pretends that his knowledge is enough for the comprehension of the conspiracy, whereas it seems that most often, he cannot even understand the meaning of the most elementary-level happenings.

Simulation for the second time can arise in relation to Victor's drug addiction, which makes the story of the conspiracy appear as the endless float of Victor's psychedelic hallucinations: Victor gets prepared for his European journey with a plastic bag of magic mushrooms. According to the report of Albert Hoffman, the researcher of LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs having approximately the same effect,

in the LSD state the boundaries between the experiencing self and the outer world more or less disappear, depending on the depth of the inebriation. [...] A portion of the self overflows into the outer world, into objects, which begin to live, to have another, a deeper meaning. This can be perceived as a blessed or *as a demonic transformation imbued with terror, proceeding to a loss of the trusted ego*. [...] In both conditions, which often last only for a timeless moment, a reality is experienced that exposes a gleam of the transcendental reality, in which universe and self, sender and receiver are one. (italics mine).¹⁶

¹⁵ E.g. "That just isn't an acceptable *scenario*, baby, but I'm at an automated teller right now with my Vespa [...]" (19); "Pause, while I consider this *scenario* [...]" (20); "The *music in the background* is mid-period Duran Duran." (24). (Italics mine.)

¹⁶ Cf. Albert Hofmann, *LSD – My Problem Child*, Jonathan Ott trans., in *Flashback*,

From this aspect, the occasional shifts of narration into second and third person can be derived from the self-perception of the experiencing self in this narcotic state. Likewise, the narcotic experiences could account for the last chapter, recounting the moment of death.

One day a normal-looking rainbow appears and *you* vaguely notice it [...] (217, italics mine);

A shot of *Victor* forcing a smile, looking down, a subtle refusal, a small movement of the head, a gesture that says *I'm* not interested. (365, italics mine)

The third significant factor which unsettles the reality of the fictional world is Victor's memory since on his own confession, he does not only suffer from short-term, but also from long-term memory disfunction. Although in the original context, by the admission of his deficiency, he only wants to evade an uneasy situation, and though a few chapters later, he recognizes every pop song, citing the performer of the hit, the title of the record, the name of the publishing company, furthermore, even the length of the song to the second, suspicion arises that Victor has real problems with recalling the past supposedly because of the damage of his autobiographical memory, which helps us reconstruct the events of our life.¹⁷ Nonetheless, his amnesia is not complete; according to the present state of memory research, he rather shows similarity with those suffering from autobiographical confabulation. The intellect of these individuals—in comparison with other amnesic patients—usually remains integral, and they are able to relate their past fluently, with remarkable detailedness; however, these reports appear to be very bizarre due to their countless contradictions.¹⁸ The reason for this lies in the fact that these patients have difficulty in separating their real memories and the associations created by their fantasy, and instead of the obscure real memories, they frequently choose fantasy.¹⁹ Insofar we conceive the narration as the series of an extensive unit's unadjustable story segments which overwhelms the reader with a book of unreliable information due to the clouded autobiographical memory, the novel

available: http://www.flashback.se/archive/my_problem_child/, access: 03 May 2006.

¹⁷ Cf. Alan Baddeley, *Human Memory: Theory and Practice* (Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1990), 293.

¹⁸ For the concepts of 'clouded autobiographical memory' and 'autobiographical confabulation' cf. *ibid.*, 315–8.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 316.

tells us the story of a character's search for identity and its various constructions. Since eternal youth, the ideal of Victor's generation, appears to be achievable only through the acts of a continuous presence excluding any other time aspects (i.e. being present on the covers of magazines, on MTV, in the movie *Flatliners II*, etc.), Victor denies his past and his identity.

However, at the point where one of the conditions of staying alive is the understanding of the system of the conspiracy, and thus inevitably self-comprehension as well, the past drifts back to Victor's life, giving him a chance to reach self-identity, which is nothing else, but the knowledge of the vanity of his existence since the father wants the alter ego. So, in quite a paradoxical way, comprehension becomes possible during such a narration whose moral refuses the sense of the desire for comprehension. In Foucault's view, every kind of narration is at once the procrastination of death.²⁰ Here, however, as the procession of the narration places the attainment of identification or reidentification within the frames of the understanding of the conspiracy, the situation is exactly the reverse. The narration postpones death, but self-comprehension, which gets completed quite slowly and quite imperfectly, precisely finds its subservience in a destiny which has been temporarily eliminated. The changes of condition in the novel correlate with the changes of consciousness, which can come to rest exclusively if this consciousness ceases to exist. The ultimate reference of the text is thus nothing else, but the certainty of death, passing away, which, on the other hand, due to the logic of substituteability and exchangeability arises as a persistent presence, repetition, eternal recurrence. This is referred to by the last reminiscence, which tells us about the moment of release over non-existence and about the intentional erasure of this moment from memory. (Cf. 542) All this means that despite the fact that there remained loose threads in the conspiracy, the text allows the possibility that there are answers for the posed questions; however, it is obvious that the locus of those is situated outside the space of the text, or from Victor's point of view, in a dimension beyond this world:

I'm drinking a glass of water in the empty hotel bar at the Principe di Savoia and staring at the mural behind the bar and in the mural is a giant mountain, a vast field spread out below it where villagers are

²⁰ Cf. "To speak of heroes or as a hero, to desire to construct something like a work, to speak so that others speak of it to infinity, to speak for 'glory,' was indeed to move toward or against this death maintained by language; to speak as a sacred orator warning of death, to threaten men with this end beyond any possible glory, was also to disarm death and promise immortality." Michel Foucault, "Language to Infinity," Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon trans., in James D. Faubion ed., *Aesthetics Method and Epistemology* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 94.

celebrating in a field of long grass that blankets the mountain dotted with tall white flowers, and in the sky above the mountain it's morning and the sun is spreading itself across the mural's frame, burning over the small cliffs and the low-hanging clouds that encircle the mountain's peak, and a bridge strung across a pass through the mountain will take you to any point beyond that you need to arrive at, because behind that mountain is a highway and along that highway are billboards *with answers* on them— *who, what, where, when, why*—and I'm falling forward but also moving up toward the mountain, my shadow looming against its jagged peaks, and I'm surging forward, ascending, sailing through dark clouds, rising up, a fiery wind propelling me, and soon it's night and stars hang in the sky above the mountain, revolving as they burn.

The stars are real.

The future is that mountain. (543, italics mine).

By committing the elaboration of the answers to the readers in the long run, *Galmorama*, even if not in a traditional way, still relieves tension deriving from the theme of alter egos, conspiracy, the alternation of time levels and focalization.

Furthermore, besides the so far covered cases of simulation, one more is still left to discuss. It does not concern the plot or the mode of narration, but the person of the author. The last, sixth part of the text—where the numbering of the chapters, differing from the other parts, is an increasing one—does not only relate the unnarratable end. In the retrospective chapter 0, Victor gets authorial functions when a girl gives voice to her appraisal concerning his short story he read out in one of the workshops of the college (529). Although no other place in the text justifies Victor's being as an author, yet owing to the simulative logic of *Glamorama*, to Victor's unreliability as a narrator, and to the positioning of all these moments to one of the most emphatic places of the novel, we can rightly regard Victor as the author of the text, the plot, i.e. the story or the short story, namely as a person who is responsible for the produced text as its composer, creator. If we attempt to understand the allegory of the quest of the self or of (re)identification from this point of view, we always find the traces of an authorial presence which reveals itself only indirectly, which is the most difficult to recognize when it is the most apparent (cf. "Who the fuck is Moi?", 5), and which can become perceivable only when it tries to cover, abolish its own operation, cf. Victor's application as a narrator, who is at once tremendously foolish, dumb, ignorant, but all the same, has knowledge about the whole story. Therefore, in *Glamorama*, the formation of the text concerning the imagined future gets realized in a way that metafiction originating from different

simulacra and simulative acts gains its most probable explanation in a concept having been considered invalid for a good while—at least within Hungarian literary convention—i.e. in the incalculability of the authorial intention, or if you choose, in the arbitrariness of the author.

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LITERARY TELENOVELS

When we start talking about television, we always have to keep in mind that the most important thing that defines a programme is the markers of the number of viewers. This is all the more important in the case of telenovels, not only because popularity is the force that makes it live or die, but also because of the interactive character of this genre, that allows the audience to change the story itself according to its interest. Beside the economic factor, we have to examine the cultural importance of these programmes, as well. The interaction of these two levels determines telenovels. In my study, I would like to emphasize the importance of this interaction in telenovels, a genre that provides an excellent example of the cultural role of television.

Itamar Even-Zohar in *Literature as Goods, Literature as Tools*¹ describes her concept about the functions of literature. She sees the basic functions of literature in two characteristics: literature as goods means that the elements of literature (texts, authors etc.) signify wealth and prestige. The things that cannot function as goods, cannot be characterized as culture. "Goods which cannot be evaluated by an accepted market cannot consequently have value, and therefore are not labeled – in this conception of culture – as »culture«. In this conception, one is therefore allowed to speak of entities as »having no culture«, if they are diagnosed as not being in possession of a defined set of required goods."²

Literature as tools means that the pieces of culture can be used as tools for the organization of life. They have two types: "passive" and "active" tools. "Passive" tools "are procedures with the help of which »reality« is analyzed, explained, and gets to »make sense« for human beings."³ "Active" tools "are procedures with the help of which an individual can handle any given situation, as well as produce any such situation. As Swindler puts it, culture is »a repertoire, or 'toolkit' of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action'«".⁴

¹ Itamar Even-Zohar: *Literature as Goods, Literature as Tools*. In: *Neohelicon* XXIX (2002) 1, 75–83.

² *ibid*, 76.

³ *ibid*, 76.

⁴ *ibid*, 76.

Even-Zohar stresses that in her concept literature should be understood not only as texts, but also “as a network, a complex of activities”. “one must be freed from the conception of »literature« as only a collection of texts, chiefly canonical.”⁵ “In this conception, »literature« does not figure either as an »aesthetic« instrument or amusement for the privileged. It is, rather, conceived of the other way around, namely as a powerful social institution, one of the most basic instruments of most human societies, which has served to order and handle their repertoires for organizing their life.”⁶

This concept of culture allows us to speak about telenovels as part of literature, and as an action that is in close connection with other parts of the literary institute, maintaining dialogue with them and functioning in collaboration with them. This point of view helps us not only notice the classical references of telenovels, but also recognise their special role in our culture.

I would like to stress that there is a big difference between telenovels and soap operas. There is a geographical distance between them (soap opera is the American, telenovela is the Brazilian – Latin-American name of television series), and there are also some elementary characters of the genres. The most visible difference is that telenovels have an end, while soap operas can be continued for years. This is in connection with the origin of the series. Soap operas were developed from commercials, the first of which appeared in the radio. One of them was *Amos and Andy*, a popular series about two African-American men, that was a toothpaste ad. Procter and Gamble saw the opportunity in this project, and started to advertise their products the same way. This is why they are called soap operas. Nowadays we can also find commercials in series, not only in soap operas, but in other films, as well.

The roots of the telenovels can also be found in the radio series. The difference is that when the genre was adapted to TV, the subject was not submitted to a consumer ideology but to a social one. The first telenovels were adaptations of classic and popular novels, so as to bring literature to those Brazilians, who cannot buy any books or cannot even read.

The classical literary roots of the telenovels signifies those first adaptations of novels, and they appear in the main characteristics of the genre. Rose Calza⁷ drew attention to the connection between the structure of the telenovels and the way the great novels of the 18th and 19th centuries were read. Ferenc Pál⁸ speaks about their

⁵ *ibid*, 77.

⁶ *ibid*, 80.

⁷ Rose Calza: *O Que é Telenovela*. Editora Brasiliense, São Paulo, 1996.

⁸ Ferenc Pál: *The Novel of the Future; Is It the Telenovel?* In:
www.filmkultura.iif.hu/articles/essays/telenove.en.html

connection with the medieval romance. These similarities appear in the structure of these narratives: the conflicts of the story have to be organised in a way that keeps the reader/viewer on reading/watching tv. The story has to keep their interest awake, so as to get the viewer to sit in front of the television next day same time.

This heritage of the serial literary classics in telenovels strengthens the function of goods, the concept of Even-Zohar. Telenovels have to use the classical instruments of serial narratives, to get more viewers and keep those who already watch them. The valuability of a programme depends on the number of its viewers. But the connection with the classical literature gives other functions to the telenovels, that enrich their function as tools.

When the first telenovels appeared in Hungary, Zoltán Rózsa⁹ noticed that although they created a new visual genre, they satisfied old claims of the audience. They gratified the need for collective literature, such as the epic, the myths, the medieval tale of chivalry, the picaresque, the serial novels of the 18th and 19th century or the popular folk books. Rózsa thinks that telenovels saved these genres onto the screen.

Rose Calza describes telenovels as a mixture of the heritage of different genres: "Most of the time the result is a mixture of the tradition of radio, a cabbage of literature, and stereotypes of cinema, subordinated to a number of chematic rules specified less by aesthetic options and more by economic pressure, or rather the needs of commercial TV."¹⁰ She says, telenovel is an "inter-semiotic entertaining spectacular".¹¹

This description underlines both functions of telenovels as goods and as tools. To be valuable goods, telenovels have to serve as perfect tools. Nowadays they have to satisfy not only the needs of the illiterate audience, but also other layers of TV viewers (the medium class, male viewers, etc.). Because of this need, telenovels have a special timetable: the one at six o'clock for grandparents and children, the one at seven o'clock is for teens, and the one at eight o'clock is for adults. Especially these last ones have to satisfy not only the needs of housewives, but also that of a wider group of viewers. To be able to serve these claims, they use the toolkit of other genres. In the followings, I would like to show an example of how telenovels use elements of classical pieces of literature, and how they communicate with them in order to satisfy their huge number of viewers.

⁹ Zoltán Rózsa: *Száznyolcvan folytatásban csúcsidőben*. In: Filmvilág, 1982/12. 59–61.

¹⁰ „na maioria das vezes o resultado é uma mistura de tradição do rádio, sucata de literatura e clichês cinematográficos, submetida a um conjunto primário de regras esquemáticas impostas menos por opções estéticas e mais por pressões econômicas, ou seja, pelas necessidades da TV comercial.” Rose Calza, 8.

¹¹ „espetáculo intersemiótico de entretenimento” Rose Calza, 13.

This connection between telenovels and classical novels is very explicit in the characters of the stories. Many times, they are borrowed from literary texts, mostly from classical, but 'popular' texts. 'Popular' here means well-known, but, not necessarily well-read. These elements do not function as literary texts, but as topoi, so that the audience doesn't have to know their origins to be able to recognise that the character has been borrowed, and has its own story, that is brought to the actual narrative by them.

To see this function clearly, I collected some examples from a telenovel rather interesting. *Padre Coraje*¹² is an Argentine series, a quite perfect one, not only because of its technical professionalism, but also because of its energetic, compact, clear-cut story, interesting characters and primarily because of its fascinating communication with literary texts, which is clearly seen in its characters. Here are the characters that refer most explicitly to a literary tradition.

Coraje (Gabriel Jauregui, Padre Coraje), the 'Saviour'

The protagonist of this series has three names, because of his quite complicated life (what else could be the basis of a telenovel?). He was an orphan and used to be an honest bandit with his closest friends, Santo and Mercedes. His nickname is Coraje (meaning brave), and nobody knew them, because they always wore a long, hooded coat and looked like a monk's cowl.

Coraje resembles Robin Hood, he is an honest bandit, who helps the poor, a kind of out-of-law hero. But he is never called by this name, only his friend, Santo (see below). But he is also called 'The Pilgrim' by Manuel Costa (the main villain, his biggest enemy). Manuel knows about a sacred book, in which the story of 'The New World' (La Cruz) is written, and in which the coming of 'The Pilgrim', who brings new order is mentioned. Manuel is the lord of La Cruz, so he thinks he should find this Pilgrim, and kill him. 'The Pilgrim' is Coraje, so Manuel's main motivation during the whole story is to kill him.

Coraje is a character inherited from the Bible: he is a special transformation of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world ('The New World'), the healer, the embodiment of the good. Coraje cured Ana, who lived in a wheelchair until Coraje came into the town. He also resuscitated a woman, who had died in childbirth, cured Ana's face, which was burned in a fire. And he saved his own child's life in the bellie of his mother, Clara, when she almost lost the baby. These miracles were done by a pray, while Coraje put his hand on the patient/dead person.

¹² *Padre Coraje*. Pol-ka, Yair Dori Communications. Argentina, 2004.

The theme of the Saviour is strengthened by the element of sacrifice, as well. Coraje leads a revolution in La Cruz, and when military forces arrive in the town, they plan to execute Coraje. Naturally, in the last moment he is saved by Juan Perón. Coraje almost dies for the town, being the saviour of the 'New World'. The act of Sacrifice connects his character with the figure of Jesus. Coraje has a sign, that makes this connection clearer: he wears a cruciform scar on his back. This parallel between Coraje and Jesus Christ becomes explicit in the last episodes, when Manuel Costa (the infernal protagonist, see below) prepares a crucifix for Coraje, captures him and tries to kill him in the same way as Jesus was killed: Manuel scourges him, tortures him, puts a thorn crown onto his head and crucifies him. Coraje almost dies, when a miracle saves his life.

Manuel Costa, 'Faust'

The sacral character of Coraje is emphasized by his counterpart, Manuel Costa, who is the infernal protagonist of the telenovel. He is the owner of the sacred book, that includes the prophecy of 'The Pilgrim' (reference to the book of the Bible), and he is in connection with the Devil, who helps him (or, as it sometimes looks, who is helped by him) to destroy Coraje. He enters into a contract with the Devil, who promises that he gives him Coraje, if Manuel kills three people. After Manuel signes the contract with his blood, he always sees a dog snarling at him when Coraje is near him. The same dog shows him the persons he has to kill. Manuel does not use any weapons for his murders, except for his teeth. In these murders Manuel identifies himself with the Devil, that appears in the form of a dog. In Goethe's *Faust* the Devil also appears in the shape of a dog.

Manuel Costa represents the Faust theme in this telenovel. The contract with the Devil has been written up in literature many times, in many forms, but this telenovel does not try to fit to one adaptation. The most important in this genre is to refer to literary themes, not to texts. They bring topoi onto the screen. The viewers can recognize Faust by those special elements from which this character is built. There has to be an embodiment of the Devil, a contract that should be signed with blood, and other small elements that can be borrowed from other adaptations of the theme.

The embodiment of the Devil, as I have mentioned earlier, is usually realized in the shape of a dog. But when the act of signing the contract happens, the figure with whom Manuel has a discussion is in a human shape, but does not have a visible body, because it appears in a monk's cowl with a hood so big, that we cannot see his face. This embodiment refers to the character of Coraje, the divine figure of the story, and emphasises his sacredness and his connection with Jesus, by showing him in perfect opposition with the Devil. In Marlowe's

Doctor Faustus Mephistophilis also appears in monk's clothes, because when he first appears in his infernal shape, Faustus asks him to leave and come back in a monk's figure.

"I charge thee to returne, and change thy shape,
thou art too ugly to attend on me:
Go and returne an old *Franciscan* Frier,
That holy shape becomes a devill best."¹³

In *Padre Coraje* this action leaves the ironic taste of the original text by the explicit opposition with Coraje, that it refers to.

The place where the agreement is made is significant, as well. Manuel and his friends, the nobles, who established La Cruz had a secret sect, and the place, where they had met is a huge hall, a rotunda under the town's main square. From the house of each members of the sect a tunnel leads to this rotunda. In the middle of the room there is a round table sectioned for the members, with a sign of the crucifix in each section. This is a sacral place, where the most important actions of the story happen. In each telenovel we can find a place like this. It may be the house, where the protagonists' parents live (an archetipical mother and father), a house, where the characters meet, etc. As Tímea Antalóczy sais, "an archetipical place, that can be identified as the geographical and psychic center of energy, the meeting point of the strings of the story, and last but not least a dramaturgical center, at the same time."¹⁴

In this series the rotunda emphasizes the sacrality of this central point. The circle is a shape, that protects from the Devil. For example, in Goethe's *Faust* the witch stands Faust into a circle, when she gives him a magic drink, because Faust would be destroyed by the immense power of the infernal action without the protection of the circle. When Manuel 'fights' with 'The Mother', Amanda, the protective force of the circle can be seen very explicitly. Amanda is tempted by the Devil, but she resists, and kills herself instead of accepting the Devils offer of a happy and long life. Interestingly she sticks a knife into her chest sitting on the round table, and then falls onto it. In the last picture of this scene, we see Amanda on the table and Manuel on the floor lying next to each other: Amanda inside and Manuel outside the circle.

¹³ Christopher Marlowe: *The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus* (B Text, 1616) Ed: Hilary Binda. www.perseus.tufts.edu/Texts/fasustus.html, 1/3.

¹⁴ „archetipikus hely, ami egyszerre tekinthető a cselekmény földrajzi és lelki energiaközpontjának, a meseszálak találkozási pontjának s nem utolsósorban dramaturgiai központjának. Tímea Antalóczy: *A szappanoperák virtuális világa*. In: *Jelkép*, 2001/2. 74.

The character of Manuel brings classical elements into the telenovel, but as Rose Calza mentioned it, a telenovel is a mixture of different cultural spheres. When Manuel is under the force of the Devil (when he murders or speaks about the murder), his eyes change their colour: they become white. This is a heritage of the cinema: the popular films about innocent persons occupied by the Devil offer many typical visual effects for these scenes. With the use of these schemes, the audience would be sure about what they are watching. If Manuel has white eyes, like the protagonist of a recent horror film, one could easily recognise the presence of the Devil.

Santo Tomini, 'Robin Hood'

Santo is one of Coraje's best friends, he used to be a member of the bandit group. He was also an orphan, he is like a brother of Coraje. He is always next to him, helps him, but he is not a heroical protagonist, he is much more a kind helper of Coraje. As I have mentioned before, the bandit group of Coraje reminds to the group of Robin Hood. But this name is used only in the case of Santo: his wife, Messina says to him sometimes: "You're like a real Robin Hood."

The legend of Robin Hood is written in some ballads and is also mentioned in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, but this figure has never appeared as the protagonist of a classical, canonised piece of art. We can say that this figure is much more of a popular legend, than a reference to the so called high-art of literature. This opinion might sound too brave, but I would only like to underline the difference between the origins of the last two themes (the Saviour and Faust) and the topic of Robin Hood. All these figures are popular enough to be used in a film like this. But it is important, that in the first two cases the origins of the themes were from a 'higher' literary tradition than the figure of Robin Hood.

This difference of the original texts appears in the role of these characters in this telenovel. While Coraje and Manuel constitute the sacral, misterious level of the story, Santo as Robin Hood is on the level of the adventure. The literary origin is on a 'lower' level, and the character is on a lower level of the story. Santo represents a lower level of the story by the actions he is part of (he is not the part of the main story line, but some other accessory events), this is strengthened by his connection to the theme of Robin Hood.

Pedro Olmos Rey, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Pedro is the husband of the third person of Coraje's bandit group, Mercedes. Pedro is ill, he has a split personality: in one moment he is a kind person,

in the next moment he is an aggressive murderer. These two personalities are fighting with each other very expressively: in these scenes we can see two Pedros: the good one is frightened, while the bad one is rude and he is always smoking. When Pedro is 'alone', but his aggressive self is ruling him, he is smoking, too. This small gesture makes it easy to realize, who is acting.

Doubled personality also has a literary tradition. The best known text is Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.¹⁵ Pedro's status in the story (he is a supporting character) and his literary origins connect him with Santo. Here we can see the same situation: the popular register of literature is adapted into the 'popular' level of the telenovel.¹⁶

There can be found many other literary elements in other characters as well. I have here presented only those, in which the literary roots appear in the most explicit way. These characters function as literary themes, and they have this same property in each episode. In the other characters we can recognise literary elements too, but it depends on the actual scene, so it's not a permanent characteristic of them.

We can say, that literary roots are quite important in the characters. *Padre Coraje* is a very good example of this phenomenon, but we can find examples in other series, too. For example, in the Mexican telenovel, *Las Vias del Amor*,¹⁷ a young prostitute is called Lolita. She has a relationship with an old man, but nothing else could be found in her character that connects her with the figure of Nabokov's *Lolita*. But her name and her relationship with the old man is enough to connect her with the literary theme, and to recognize her character in the first moments of the series.

The characters refer to a literary topos, and by this reference the audience can easily identify them, they know their main characteristics by it and know the ending of their story. These characters are built up on the basis of their relationship with the literary tradition. We know in the first moment, that Lolita has sexual importance (she is a prostitute in the series), and is connected to an old man; we know that a man whose sign is a crucifix is a kind of Saviour (Coraje), and that his main enemy is the Devil, or a force that is in close connection with the infernal forces (Manuel).

¹⁵ Robert Louis Stevenson: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Dover, New York, 1991.

¹⁶ 'popular' level of the telenovel: meaning that the subordinated story lines usually satisfy more popular needs than the main story. The supported characters can be comical, vulgar, etc. In this case they represent the adventure (Santo) and the thriller (Pedro).

¹⁷ *Las Vias del Amor*. Televisa, Mexico, 2002.

Dialogues have special importance in telenovels. "the persons »are« only because they »speak« in many modes, to get emotions and information to us."¹⁸ – says Rose Calza. The characters 'are', because they 'speak', because they maintain a dialogue with each other, and, as we can see from the examples, with the literary tradition. These characters exist in relations, they are only a collection of literary patterns.

The audience of the telenovels, of course usually does not know (and does not have to know) the literary origins of the recited themes. However, they know that they are cited. These themes have such a great popularity, that one does not have to know the origin of it in order to understand the intertextuality, or in a Genettien system, its hypertextuality. One only has to know that an old story of a character exists (Faust for example), which is used in the telenovel. (The references to the Bible are different, of course, where the origin of the borrowed texts is well-known.) Recognising known figures and the completion of their stories in the expected way can give gratification to the audience. If they like watching it, the commercial markers of the telenovel will rise, giving a financial base for the telenovel.

The important for us is that these series mediate literary themes to the audience, and by this action, keep these stories alive. Stephen Greenblatt¹⁹ calls these cultural elements the pieces of social energy, that is represented on the stage, and by that action the stage renews this energy and circulates it back to the audience.

If we watch this cultural action from the point of view of Itamar Even-Zohar, we can say that the tool function of telenovels is this circulation of literary themes. They circulate them not only through ages (what Greenblatt talks about), but also among cultural levels. The first telenovels brought literature to the illiterate audience. By now, this function has been changed, but it has not died: they transform literary texts and bring them to their immense audience.

In the case of *Padre Coraje* this action is very explicit. The main characters can be understood by the tradition, but at the same time, the themes are transformed, given new life, and circulated to the audience. Telenovel is a very important genre of television culture that it appears in the whole world. It has a huge group of audience, its cultural role is incontestable. The economic power that gives life to this genre and its function as goods determines the characteristics of it, and by this action it can occupy its role as a cultural tool.

¹⁸ „os personagens só »são« porque »falam« de muitas maneiras, fazendo chegar até nós emoção é informação.” Rose Calza, 32.

¹⁹ Stephen Greenblatt: *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

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**MINIMALISM AND ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT
IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS / FINAL REPORT
FOR THE JAPAN FOUNDATION**

Background: No description of the cultural landscape of today's post-industrial societies can be complete without a detailed explanation of how sub-cultural differences add up to what is generally seen as global uniformity. This more or less coherent intertextual net of sub-cultural signs and signifying practices is what has been in the centre of my research into literary and cultural studies for more than a decade now. Dealing with this topic has had one major conclusion: the experience that contemporary urban culture is a diverse sphere posing questions that need to be addressed from a comparative point of view in order to understand its complexity. This post-structuralist comparative technique in my practice has proven to be useful in theorizing contemporary fiction, fashion, popular music, and a variety of other phenomena characteristic of contemporary culture, or, rather cultures. Different topics as they might seem, a comparative approach brings these aspects of culture together and enables one to study and describe the intertextual structure, which provides meaning and form to these expressive practices and performances of everyday urban life. My four research trips to North-America and field trips to all major cities in Europe have provided me with first-hand experiences and in-depth knowledge of the urban sub-cultures of the Western world, their distinctive role and constitutive place in what is usually conceived as global culture. Published in English language studies and presented on conferences in Budapest, Cluj Napoca, and Szeged, the findings of this large-scale research have drawn academic interest. These findings, however, also led to the conclusion that most forms of contemporary urban art may be observed in, and, sometimes, indeed originate from, the urban environments of the East, particularly, Japan. It was this conclusion that highlighted Japanese urban sub-cultures as symbolic discourses of great interest, and, starting with an intensive research at the *Istituto Orientale Universita' degli Studi di Napoli*, I have studied the origins of global cultures in detail for the last five years.

Aims of achievement: In order to broaden my focus and gain a better understanding of the characteristics of representative practices at work in the contemporary urban cultures of Japan, I intend to carry out an intensive field

research into how the processes of meaning generating through non-verbal signs (fashion, brand names, style, etc.) are employed in urban cultures of Tokyo as well as how Japanese minimalist art interprets post-modern realities. My aim is to observe the differences, and, to interpret the similarities of how Western and Japanese urban sub-cultures and their art symbolize realities. Comparative studies on the subject are rare, and, for the most part, do not draw on first-hand experiences and observations. My research will describe components of contemporary culture in Tokyo not studied before, and it will detail how Japanese minimalism transforms and articulates the experiences of those living in urban Japan. Symbolic meaning generating processes in the dynamics of urban social interaction will be central areas of attention, and urban art will also be part of the examination of social life in Tokyo. These aspects of Japanese society and culture are little known in Eastern Europe, let alone in Hungary, yet there can be no doubt about it that a more detailed picture of contemporary urban cultures in Tokyo will contribute to a better understanding of Japan as a whole.

Research plan: Describing the ways in which discourses of popular culture position the consumer subject, and create subject-positions to identify with in contemporary Tokyo will be the most important aspect of the research into the signifying practices and interpretive strategies of the semi-institutionalized cultures in urban Japan. The objective of this research is to detail the differences in post-industrial urban societies and to describe the origins of the dominant symbolic meaning generating processes observed in global cultures. I will study the representative works of post-modern Japanese urban art, and my objective will be a detailed research into minimalism and other relevant forms of contemporary art in Japan. I will describe the forms of intertextuality in, and, the rhetorical characteristics of, the socio-cultural phenomena observed, and account for the role of these features in the meaning generating processes. In order to understand these phenomena I will carry out a detailed interpretation of Japanese minimalism with special attention to its intertextual characteristics by analysing dominant non-verbal signifying systems. Attending libraries and visiting professionals of the field at the *Tōkyō Daigaku*, *Waseda Daigaku*, and *Sophia Daigaku* are also part of my research plan.

Significance: Semantic structures of ever-changing discursive strategies and sub-cultures characterised by a dynamic signifying relation with the socio-cultural sphere of post-modernism are multileveled, complex sets of reference. This phenomenon has crucial consequences for the signifying practices and interpretive strategies of urban youth sub-cultures. This territory has always proved to be a border zone, even for cultural criticism. The sign-structures and meaning generating processes to be studied in Tokyo, for the most part, have

been described only in North-American and European urban environments so far, and their detailed analysis in Tokyo will be an invaluable asset to our understanding of how intertextual sign-sets are structured in contemporary urban Japan. The analysis of Japanese minimalism will be based on a comparative interpretation of intertextual characteristics of non-verbal art with references to other symbolic activities (advertisements, comics, etc.). This technique will enable me to interpret Japanese minimalism in a broader theoretical context, thus opening up the category of Japanese minimalism to the concepts of postmodernism and post-industrial culture. This will help me draw a general picture of contemporary urban cultures and art in Tokyo, most of which are unknown to professionals, let alone the general public. The findings will be published in English and in Hungarian in European literary and cultural periodicals (printed and web based), they will be presented on conferences, and will be added to my teaching practice.

Outline of the project carried out in Tokyo 01.09.05-30.09.05: In the initial phase of the project I postulated that no description of the cultural landscape of today's post-industrial societies could be complete without a detailed explanation of how sub-cultural differences add up to what is generally seen as global uniformity. In order to broaden my focus and gain a better understanding of the characteristics of representative practices at work in the contemporary urban cultures of Japan, I carried out an intensive field research in *Shibuya*, *Shinjuku* and *Ikebukuro*, and to a lesser degree in *Kawasaki* and *Yokohama*, in order to learn how the processes of meaning generating through non-verbal signs (fashion, brand names, style) are employed in urban cultures of metropolitan Tokyo. My aim was to observe the differences, and, to interpret the similarities of how Western and Japanese urban sub-cultures and their art symbolize realities. Symbolic meaning generating processes in the dynamics of urban social interaction were central areas of attention, and urban art was also part of the examination of social life in *Shibuya* and *Shinjuku*. Describing the ways in which discourses of popular culture position the consumer subject, and create subject-positions to identify with in contemporary *Shibuya* were the most important aspect of the research into the signifying practices and interpretive strategies of the semi-institutionalised cultures in urban Japan. The objective of the research was to detail the differences in post-industrial urban societies and to describe the origins of the dominant symbolic meaning generating processes observed in global cultures. The main objective of the trip was to describe the forms of intertextuality in, and, the rhetorical characteristics of, the socio-cultural phenomena observed, and account for the role of these features in the meaning generating processes. Attending libraries and visiting professionals of the field were also part of my research activities.

Results: Let me first state that it is hard to conclude a study of this kind at such an early stage: while the phase for obtaining data is over, organizing the material gathered and analysing the results will take months. It is nevertheless possible to put forward certain preliminary results (A–E).

- A) The sign-structures and meaning generating processes studied in Tokyo (including *fashion brands*, *leisure activities*, *reading and listening habits*) are for the most part different from those studied in Western European environments mainly due to their reliance on traditional cultural forms (mostly those of the expressive practices of *minimalism*) not readily available, and relatively new to Western urban subcultures. Traditional forms reinterpreted provide for much of what is seen as invention: a characteristic to be understood before the structure of meaning generating can be studied in youth subcultures. While “recycling” has been a key concept of most studies in the field, practices of “reinvention” remain to be fully understood: one aspect, which the publications resulting from my research will detail.
- (B) The intertextual net of reference between traditional meanings and contemporary signifying systems is very much present in Japan, and – as many scholars of the field note it – hampers comparing Western and Japanese youth sub-cultures. Understanding, and appreciating the consequences of which will result in inevitably linking a number of western signifying subsystems to Tokyo, as the intertextuality of these systems becomes evident.
- (C) The artistic freedom and intuitive play at work in subject constitution through style (especially vivid in *Shibuya*) form the base of several Western sub-cultural signifying systems and semi-institutionalised cultural structures. Most of these seem to originate from a certain sense of liberty in self-representation rarely seen in the West. It is indeed safe to say that strategies of subject constitution through style follow more intuitive paths in Tokyo than in New York, even if differences may be observed within Tokyo as well.
- (D) It is in the abovementioned respect that the projection of style takes place between the different subcultures, and it is through this projection that *Japanese minimalism* finds its ways to (seemingly discreet) subcultures of Japan (e.g. those of Osaka), and across the Western world.
- (E) Observation of non-verbal sign systems apparently used and perhaps invented by the target groups (youths between 15 and 30) led to the conclusion that in order for Tokyo youth subcultures to project style, it is indeed necessary to redefine traditional uses and values of signs readily available to them, and finally to relocate its meaning within a totally

different context. This shift could be very well observed in *Shibuya*, and consequent papers to be published on this aspect of post-industrial signification will discuss these results of the field research carried out there in detail.

Data collection: Data collection took place on three levels.

- (A) 1. Focus group interviews in *Ikebukuro* (2005. September 3 – 2005 September 5.) 50 interviews were conducted at and around *Ikebukuro* station in the said timeframe. Questions included those inquiring about (a) clothing choices /brand names, styles/; (b) listening habits; (c) reading habits; (c) anything else of interest /e.g. pastime activities/. The focus group was youths living in Ikebukuro aged 15-30. Male – female ratio: 42 – 58%.
- 2. Focus group interviews in *Shibuya* (2005. September 13, – 2005 September 17.) 104 interviews were conducted at and around *Shibuya* station in the said timeframe. Questions included those inquiring about (a) clothing choices /brand names, styles/; (b) listening habits; (c) reading habits; (c) anything else of interest /e.g. pastime activities/. The focus group was youths living in or passing through Shibuya aged 15-30. Male – female ratio: 50 – 50%.
- 3. Focus group interviews in *Shinjuku* (2005. September 20 – 2005 September 24.) 62 interviews were conducted at and around *Shinjuku* station in the said timeframe. Questions included those inquiring about (a) clothing choices /brand names, styles/; (b) listening habits; (c) reading habits; (c) anything else of interest /e.g. pastime activities/. The focus group was youths living in or passing through *Shinjuku* aged 15–30. Male – female ratio: 45 –55%.
- 4. Interviews in *Kawasaki, Yokohama, Ueno, Roppongi* (2005. September 27 – 2005 September 30.) 20 interviews were conducted at and around *Kawasaki, Yokohama, Ueno, Roppongi* stations in the said timeframe. Questions included those inquiring about (a) clothing choices /brand names, styles/; (b) listening habits; (c) reading habits; (c) anything else of interest /e.g. pastime activities/. The focus group was youths living or passing through these stations aged 15–30. Male – female ratio: 50 – 50%.
- (B) 1. Data collection from libraries (2005. September 7 – 2005. September 11.)
- 2. Data collection from professionals (2005 September 2; 2005 September 12; 2005 September 19; 2005 September 26.)
- (C) 1. Field study in *Ikebukuro* (pastime activities, shopping habits) 2005. September 6. Photo and film documentation.

2. Field study in *Shibuya* (pastime activities, shopping habits) 2005. September 18. Photo and film documentation.
3. Field study in *Shinjuku* (pastime activities, shopping habits) 2005. September 25. Photo and film documentation.

Further plans: As for my academic interests I would like to continue carrying out field research in urban environments with special attention on the characteristics of representative practices at work in contemporary urban cultures. My aim is still to observe the differences, and, to interpret the similarities of how different urban sub-cultures and their art symbolize realities. Symbolic meaning generating processes in the dynamics of urban social interaction will be central areas of attention, and urban art will also be part of the examination of social life in Eastern and Western metropolitan areas alike.

I would like to express my gratitude for the help of the staff at the Japan Foundation both in Budapest and in Tokyo; they gave me assistance whenever I needed: I appreciate their help and kindness – *dōmo arigatō gozaimasu*. The Japan Foundation grant was an invaluable asset to my work, and the opportunity to do field research in Tokyo was indeed an excellent chance for me to gain a better understanding of the post-modern. Also, I had a great time in Japan...



A Szegedi Tudományegyetem BTK Összehasonlító Irodalomtudományi Tanszéke által eddig kiadott diákköri kötetek:

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